

# **From Generation to Generation: Family History & Memories**

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**October 2010**

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## TO MY CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN

One day in 1986 I opened a letter from someone named Chuck Bernstein who claimed he was my cousin. How could this be? I wrote back in disbelief, asking how we could possibly be related. He answered that we had a mutual great-great-grandmother! His great-great-grandfather was her first husband and mine was her second. I didn't think this sounded right but I was determined to find out for sure.

I followed his detailed instructions for getting immigration information at the National Archives. I found my grandmother Malka's name on the ship roster and could hardly contain my excitement. Wow! Then I saw where Malka was going... Uncle Chayyim Sussman, Chuck Bernstein's great-grandfather. I was hooked!

From then on I wanted to find out as much as I could about my family history and preserve it for future generations. I made many more trips to the Archives and asked my aunts and cousins a lot of questions. Unfortunately, by the time I actually started writing my memoirs, it was too late to get much information. My mother had died many years before, her only brother died shortly after I got started, and my father's memory was starting to fade.

Although I want my children and grandchildren to know about their family, for some reason, I never made an effort to share the family stories I grew up with. Now that I've been writing about myself and my family, I realize how important the legends and lore of a family are to understanding why we think and act the way we do. In our family history, several distinct values stand out over the generations, which I hope you will continue:

- **Family responsibility**

My grandparents on both sides brought their parents to America and supported them. My parents shared their home and resources when relatives needed help. Larry and I have done the same.

I have always tried to encourage and sustain family ties with both my own and Larry's relatives. I was the one who took the initiative to start the annual Thanksgiving dinners we held in New York for many years, recognizing that this was one of the few holidays that didn't keep our orthodox branches of the family apart.

When Larry was still in graduate school, we were sending money to his mother and his brother Bernie. I took care of my mother-in-law—who I had only seen a few

times before—when she was released from the hospital. When my sister-in-law Betty Kravit died, we offered to take Tom and Sue into our home for as long as needed. Later when Joe was worried about Tom's high school friends, we offered to help out once more.

In the pages that follow, you will see many more examples of willingness to help family, both personally and financially.

- **Serious commitment to Judaism and Jewish Learning**

Great-grandfathers on both sides of my family were rabbis. I have Jewish National Fund certificates my father's parents bought to plant trees in Palestine, long before there was a State of Israel. My Grandpa Helman helped found a synagogue as did my parents.

Larry and I didn't spend money on nice vacations and, once we started paying day school tuition, we wouldn't indulge in ourselves for many years because we valued Jewish education over other choices. In addition to giving money, we gave our time in ways that had a lasting impact at Agudas Achim synagogue and the JCC in Schenectady, the Hebrew Academy in Albany, the Jewish Day School and B'nai Israel Congregation in Rockville.

I have always regretted the limits of my own Jewish education and I have continued to keep learning on my own.

- **Interest in learning of all kinds**

My Dad's mother took him to lectures. Although the family's resources were quite limited, my mother's aunt took her to piano lessons and encouraged a love of music. Both my parents were avid readers. As a stay-at-home mom I always had at least one book going to keep my mind growing despite the minutia of childcare and household chores.

I continue to take adult education courses in Judaism and Jewish history and continue to read history and biography to learn more about our cultural heritage and the world we live in.

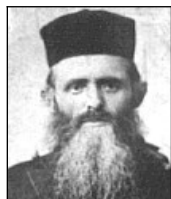
- **Generously supporting worthwhile causes**

I knew my parents made generous contributions to UJA and other charities, but I didn't realize until after my dad died that he used to donate at least ten percent of his income to charity.

Larry and I also give generously to Jewish causes—Jewish Day School, UJA, synagogue, Hebrew Home, Jewish Foundation for Group Homes, and others. We also contribute to non-Jewish charities as well, but Jewish causes are our top priority.

I hope and pray that you and your children will continue to strengthen your ties to the family, to Judaism, and our people.

# PICTORIAL FAMILY TREE



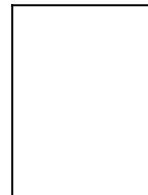
Reuven Aharon Lopert



Gittel Aigen Lopaiko Lopert



Sarah Wolitzer



Nachum Wolitzer



Abraham Joseph Weiss



Mollie Rebecca Lapporte Weiss



Tillie Wolitzer Helman



Jacob Helman



Ester Sarah Weiss Helman and Nathan Woltzer Helman



Marjorie Ruth Helman Kravitz and Lawrence Charles Kravitz



Steven Jacob Kravitz, Saul Abram Kravitz, and Alan Bruce

## PART I - THE STORY BEGINS

### My Mother's Side

#### Early Family History

My mother's cousin Dave Baron wrote that his namesake, my great-great-great-grandfather David, was born in 1802 in Lithuania. He and his wife Malke had five children: Tzemach (my great-great-grandfather), born in 1832, Eliahu, Velvel, and several daughters. Several days after dancing barefoot in the snow at a wedding celebration, David took sick and died in 1838 at the age of 37, leaving Malke to raise the five children alone.

Tzemach, as a young man, became very ill and needed a nurse. By the time he recovered, he and his nurse, Seitel Rubin, a divorcée with a small son, had become romantically involved. As divorce was very rare in those days, tongues must have been wagging in their tight-knit Jewish community. Seitel's son Chaim Sussman was sent to live with Bubbe Malke. Seitel and Tzemach had five children: David, Reuven, Isaac, Pesha Raise (Rose), Anna (Hannah).

Tzemach was probably the first Lapporte. To facilitate conscription, Russia passed a law in the 1880s, requiring all families to adopt a surname. Tzemach was from a small village near Vilkomir named Lopert and decided to take this as his family name. The family were *Mitnagdim*, favoring an intellectual and enlightened approach to Judaism.

Tzemach had a bakery in Vilkomir (now Ukmerge) in a log cabin. A board across the room was the business counter. A large barrel of herring stood in the corner and a brick oven took up most of the rest of the space. Seitel and Tzemach slept behind a curtained section in the back and their five children slept on benches in the summer and on the oven in the winter. They kept a cow and had several chickens in a hut behind their home on *Mitzraim Gass* (Egypt Street) in the Jewish ghetto. When his children were older, Tzemach also worked as a bookkeeper for a tobacco firm in Kovno. He went by train to Kovno and returned to Vilkomir each week to spend the Sabbath with his family. That was how he earned money for his daughters' dowries. He composed music and was known as the finest *baal t'filla* (prayer leader) in town. He had a strong natural voice and unquestioned sincerity. When he died in 1909 at the age of 78, the community agreed he would be difficult to replace.



**My great-great grandfather  
Tzemach Lopert.**

David, the oldest son of Tzemach and Seitel studied at the Vilkomir Yeshiva and was offered *smicha* (ordination as a rabbi) at the age of 16, but he disliked the politics and *shnorring* (begging) involved in being a rabbi. He wanted to study Talmud and was also interested in secular learning. Tzemach was afraid secular learning would lead his son away from the Jewish tradition and decided that the best way to prevent this was to find a bride from a religious family for the young man. Before David left for America in 1906, Tzemach had his picture taken. Although observant Jews usually did not want their photographs taken, Tzemach wanted to give his picture to his son as he knew they would never see each other again. David was already in Chicago, serving as the leader of the *Chevra Gemorra* of the *Russishe Shul*, when his younger brother Reuven arrived in 1908.

Like his older brother David, Reuven attended *cheder* and then the Vilkomir yeshiva. And, like David, Reuven was offered *smicha* but didn't want to be a rabbi. When he needed to earn his livelihood, he chose to become a *soffer*, a scribe who wrote Torah scrolls, *mezuzot*, and other holy works. He was not a very strong man physically and barely eked out a living for his family.<sup>1</sup>

### **My Grandmother Mollie Comes To America**

Reuven married Gittel Aigan Lopaiko<sup>2</sup> and they also had five children: Malka (my grandmother and namesake), Nettie, Edward, David, and Sheitel (Sadie). Although Mollie's Hebrew name was Rifka Malka, she was called Malka (after her great-grandmother) and later, Mollie. She was a sickly child – it was thought she had a defective heart – and was sent to her grandparents in Vilkomir each summer for fresh milk and fresh air. She came the U.S. by herself from Aniksht, Lithuania, in 1903. At some point the Loperts lived in Seta, something I learned when I saw a translated record showing that they had paid the tax for kosher meat in that town (see page 33).

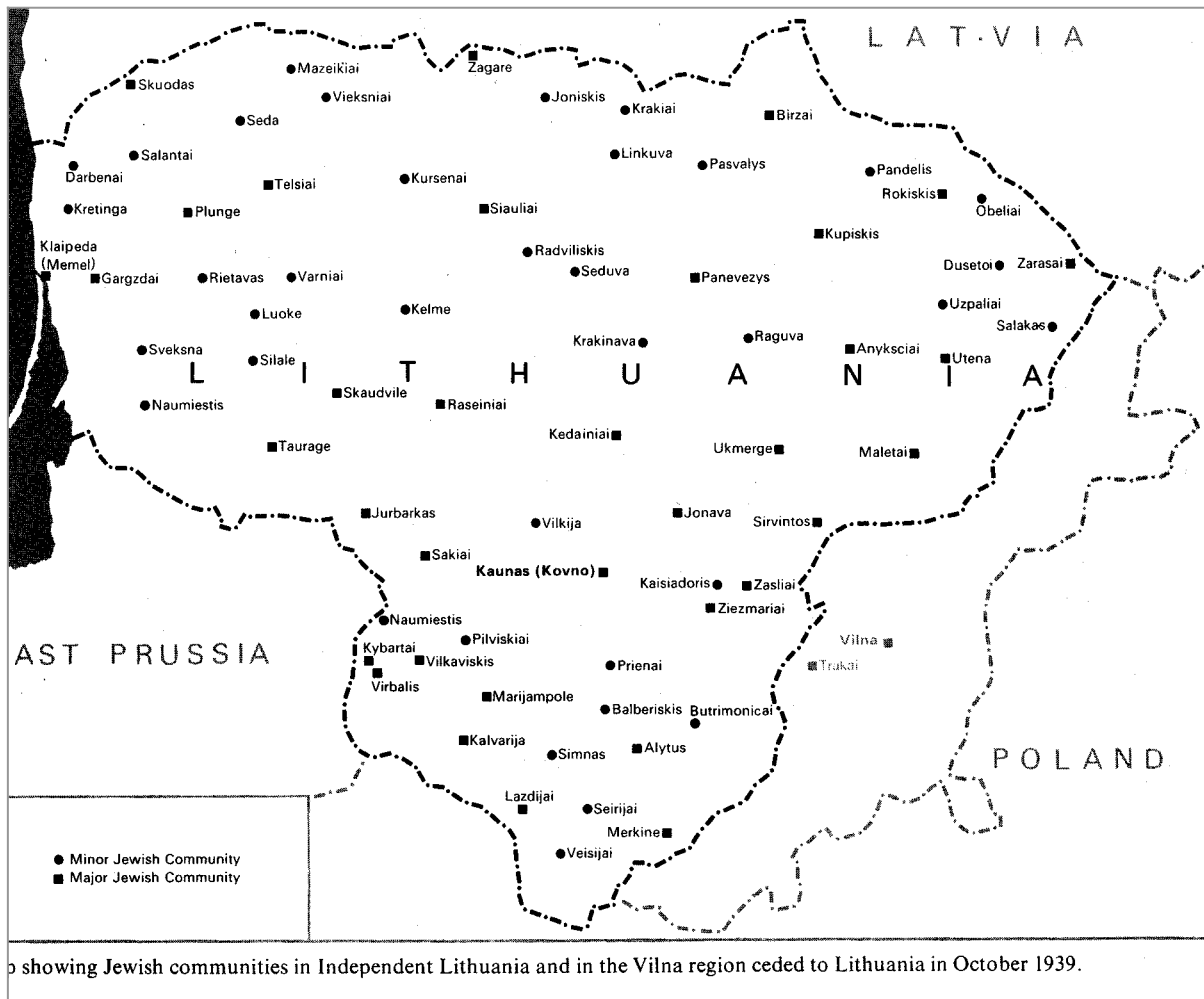
Aniksht (now Anyksciai) is in the *Gubernia* (province) of Kaunas (Kovno in Russian). From a book about Jewish Communities in Lithuania, I learned that Aniksht had been a prosperous town and provincial capital in a wheat-growing region before

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<sup>1</sup>1. Most of the information up to this point is from a family history written by David Baron, son of Pesha (youngest daughter of Tzemach and Seitel) and Joseph Baron. David Baron was born in 1906 and described life and family lore as he remembered it.

<sup>2</sup>2. I don't know when Lopert became Lapporte; Morris Laporte's side uses a slightly different spelling. Chuck Bernstein thinks the name comes from a shtetl named Lopeh. Also per Chuck, my great-grandmother, Gittel Lopaiko Lopert, may be a descendant of the famed Vilna Gaon (oral tradition, not documented).

being completely leveled during World War I. Visitors to the current Oniksht see the city that was rebuilt between World War I and World War II and during Russian occupation after World War II. Wasn't it fortunate that Mollie was able to get herself and her family out before the next decade's devastation!



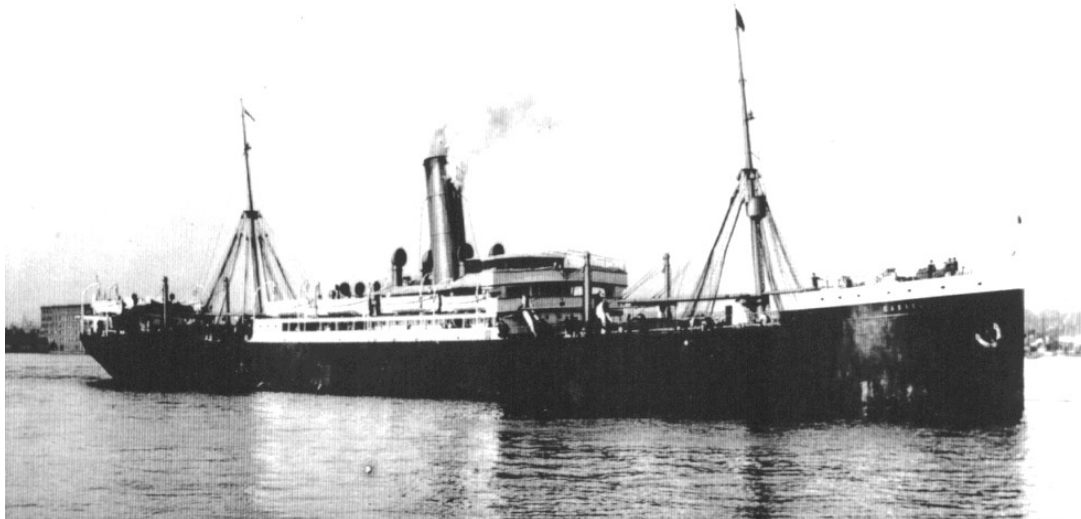
Source: Encyclopedia Judaica. Anyksčiai (Aniksht) is over the "N" in "Lithuania"

We'll never know why Mollie left Aniksht or how she got to the German port of Bremen. My guess is that, in an era of arranged marriages, she left to avoid an undesirable match or, lacking a dowry, she left because she could see no way to make any match at all. Like so many others, she came seeking a better life in the "*Goldena Medina*" as immigrants called the U.S. (Yiddish for golden land).

Mollie was short, slightly built, serious, with a determined look on her young face as she went by train to Bremen, where she boarded the *Cassel* at the age of 17. From

what I've read<sup>3</sup>, crossing the border into Germany by train could be quite traumatic, with German-speaking guards roughly taking the passengers' bundles and even their clothes for fumigation against disease.

Not many 17-year-olds today would have the courage to embark on such a difficult journey alone, knowing they would never see or speak to their family again. All future contacts would be by surface mail and messages brought by newer immigrants.



Malka sailed from Bremen to New York on this ship, the Cassel, in 1903.

<h1>Norddeutscher Lloyd</h1> <h2>LIST OR MANIFEST OF ALIEN IMMIGRANTS</h2> <p>Required by the regulations of the Secretary of the Treasury of the United States, under Act of October 3, 1917, vessel having such passengers</p>									
SS. Cassel		Sailing from Bremen							
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
NAME IN FULL	Age	Sex	Married or Single	Calling or Occupation	Able to Read Write	Nationality	Last Residence	Entered for landing in the United States	
Abraham Samuels	34	M	Mar	Merchant	Yes	Russia	Union	Hebrew	
Malka Lopart	17	F	Unm	None	No		Russia	Hebrew	
Isaac Polanowsky	18	M	Unm	Sailor	No		Russia	Hebrew	

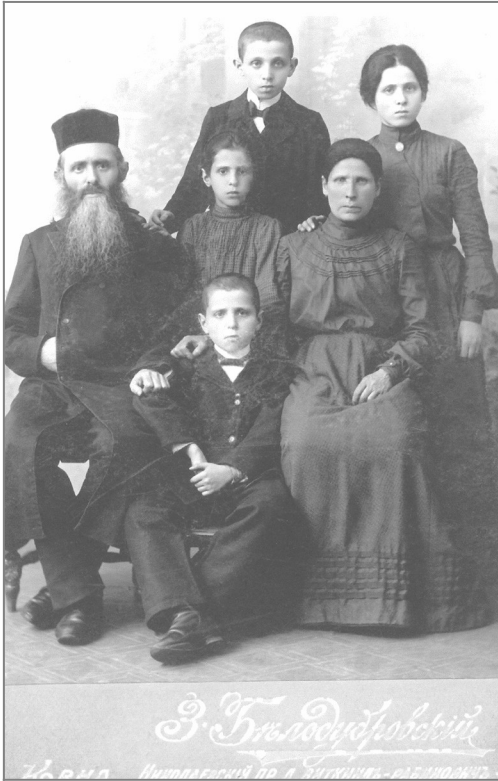
Ship roster of the Cassel with Malka's name second from the top.

<sup>33</sup> This is described in detail in *The Promised Land* by Mary Antin (1912, reissued in 1997).



Unlike most of the non-Jewish passengers on the ship, Mollie knew how to read and write, and this was typical of Jewish compared to non-Jewish emigrants. The ship roster shows Mollie's destination as "Uncle Chayyim Sussman." Sussman was her father's half-brother, son of her grandmother Seitel and her first husband. Her father's sister Anna was there too, keeping house for him after his wife died.

After Malka left for America, Reuven and Gittel had a family picture taken. As their clothes and expressions indicate, they lived modestly and had no experience smiling



**My great-grandparents Reuven and Gittel Lopert after Malka went to America. Eddie and Nettie are standing in back; Sadie and Dave are between Reuven and Gittel.**

for the camera. They must have felt this expense was necessary to help Malka (now Mollie) feel in touch with the family and to give Tzemach a picture of the family before more of them left for America.

### **The Lapporte Family Settles in Chicago**

It took Mollie a few years to save enough money to send for her sister Nettie. Next to come were their brothers Ed and Dave. In 1908, five years after she arrived in Chicago, Mollie and her three siblings sent tickets for their parents Reuven and Gittel and the youngest sister Sadie (Seitel).

It was Gittel who brought the heavy brass candlesticks I'm so proud of and the brass mortar and pestle of the same vintage. These treasured items weigh close to fifteen pounds and must have been considered valuable family heirlooms for the 4 foot, 10 inch Gittel to "*schlep*" them on such a long and difficult journey. When Uncle Dave Lapporte (my grandmother's brother) came to visit us in 1958, his face lit up, "So *you*'re the one who has *bubbe's* candlesticks," suggesting to me that they had belonged to *his bubbe*. Taking the cracked pestle in his hand, he said, "this has been cracked for as long as I can remember."

My great-grandfather Reuven Aharon was a *soffer* (Torah scribe) who had a hard time supporting his family in Aniksht. In fact, Gittel or Mollie had to borrow money to buy food for Shabbat more than once. Despite his limited means, Reuven once turned down a commission to inscribe a Torah when the would-be sponsor specified that all the work be done in the room his wife died in (about six months' work).

For immigration purposes, Reuven became Ruben and his occupation changed from "*soffer*" to "tailor" to show that he could support himself. On coming to the U.S. at

age 52, Reuven retired except for occasional work repairing *tefillin* at 35 cents a pair. My brother Robert Alan is named for our great-grandfather Reuven Aharon and my cousin Gail Weiss is named for our great-grandmother Gittel Aigan.

### The Lapporte Brothers' Businesses



**Abraham and Mollie Weiss 1905. My mother's parents**

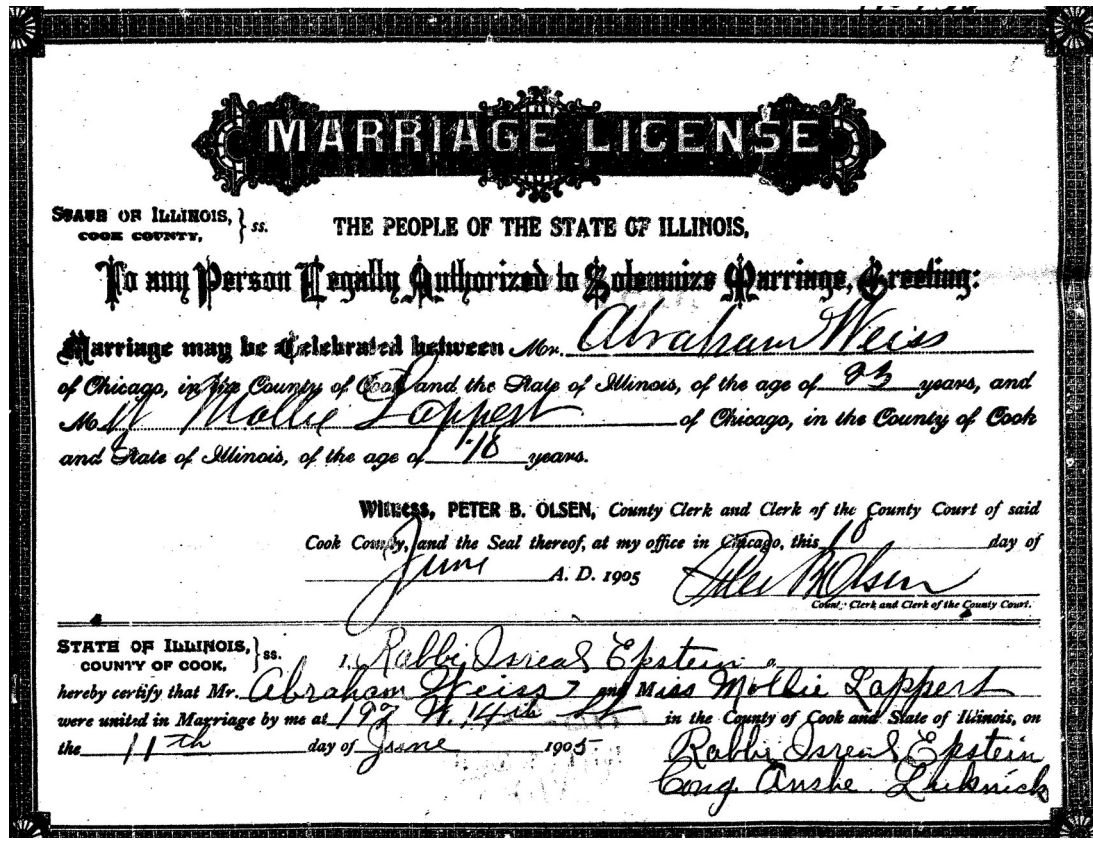
Dave Lapporte used to brag, "Eddie, Nettie and I earned enough to let our father retire when he came to Chicago." They turned their pay over to their mother Gittel and she managed the household. You can just imagine Gittel's delight in surprising Ed and Dave with bankbooks showing they had enough money to go into business for themselves. Their first venture was Lapporte Brothers Haberdashery.

Dave Lapporte (my great-uncle) liked to tell about the time Al Capone and a bodyguard came into the store to buy silk shirts. Capone took one look at the Lapportes' scrawny dog and asked, "When did that dog eat last?" Dave answered, "Last night. We give the dog a can of dog food every night." Capone took a wad of cash from his pocket, peeled out a five-dollar bill, and ordered his bodyguard, "Go across the street to

the butcher shop and get this dog a steak!" He also bought the silk shirts! Considering the diminutive size of the Lapportes — Reuven was only 5'3" and Gittel a mere 4'10"—you can just imagine Dave and Eddie shaking in their shoes before the notorious gangster.

Later the Lapporte brothers switched to manufacturing silk lingerie; their sisters Nettie and Sadie worked there too. Dave was the salesman, landing clients in Chicago (including Marshall Field), New York, and elsewhere. Nevertheless, the business failed. (Mom saved a negligee and some remnants that came in handy for dress-up on Purim). With their skills in the needle trade, "the girls" returned to working in a tie factory. After several business failures, Dave eventually succeeded with "Bar Foods."

In 1905, at the age of 18, Mollie married Abraham Joseph Weiss (a marriage her brother Dave Lapporte later described as not very happy). Abe, one of seven siblings, came from Galicia (Austria) in 1899 when he was 18. In his 1912 application for citizenship he described himself as a salesman. Abe and Mollie owned a men's clothing store in South Chicago. Like so many small shopkeepers at that time, they lived over the store.



Marriage license of my grandparents Mollie and Abraham Weiss, 1905

When my mother was an infant, her father had tuberculosis and was confined for months in a sanitarium in Battle Creek, Mich. Ed Lapporte moved in to help his sister Mollie with the store, and Nettie and Dave came every Sunday. One Sunday they found Mollie's baby Ester (later to become my mother) screaming frantically but refusing to nurse. They sent for the doctor. In the meantime Nettie took charge. Using a small spoon she fed milk to the baby, drop by drop. When the doctor finally came six hours later (remember, those were the horse-and-buggy days) he said the baby couldn't suck because her mouth was full of blisters. Nettie had saved my mother's life.

### Mollie's Death in 1915

Mollie worked very hard in the business and in the home. Mom told me her mother was very particular about her children's appearance and kept her only daughter dressed in white stockings. After Mollie died, the housekeeper immediately told Ester to wear black stockings, because white stockings were too much work.

Mollie died in 1915 when she was only 29. The death certificate shows that she'd been in Michael Reese Hospital for a month before dying from "congestive heart failure." I remember Mom saying something about her mother hemorrhaging in the bathtub and Rose Weiss remembers being told the cause of Mollie's death was gynecological. Although Mollie had been sent to her grandparents as a child because she was thought to have a heart defect and several Lapportes were said to have "weak hearts," I suspect the real cause of death was complications from an abortion<sup>4</sup>. With an unhappy marriage, difficult financial conditions, a store, and two children to care for, Mollie may not have felt able to take on responsibility for another child. But this is something we will never know for sure.



**Reuven Lapporte. My great-grandfather.**

Abe Weiss could not manage the store without Mollie. As Rose Weiss recalled in 1999, Abe sold the store shortly after Mollie died (I think his brother Dave, father of "the Weiss boys" bought him out). Then he tried to sell life insurance. Unfortunately, the only policies he sold were to the extended family. Overwhelmed by his financial problems and grief, he left his children with their grandparents and disappeared out of their lives.

To my surprise, Uncle Nate felt no bitterness at the way his father abandoned him. Nate said his father grew restless and the Lapportes encouraged him to make a new life for himself. Abe went to Cleveland, where he proceeded to lose what money he had in a manufacturing company. He also married again to someone we knew as "Aunt Yetta."

Many years after he left, Abe Weiss came back to Chicago, and my mother helped him get a job and apartment through her former boss. For a short time, he lived with us. But as Uncle Nate reflected, "he'd been away too long—he had lost us. His mistakes turned out well for us—we had a wonderful upbringing."

### **Life with the Lapportes**

Ester, the big sister, became her brother's protector and problem-solver. Both grew up to be somewhat fearful and superstitious. At first they remained at home with their father, under the care of a housekeeper. Before long, they were living with their Lapporte grandparents, aunts, and uncles on Chicago's West Side. Losing their mother at such a young age had a profound effect on seven-year old Ester and four-year old Nathan. Even as grownups they were unusually close.

I was under the impression they moved into their grandparents' home within a year, but in 1986 Nate Weiss wrote that he was about ten when his father left them with

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<sup>4</sup>4. I asked Alan about my hunch in light of the diagnosis; he said in the days before antibiotics, an aseptic abortion and unchecked infection could conceivably lead to congestive heart failure.

the Lapportes. Probably the truth is somewhere in between: Mollie died in 1915 and by the time of the 1920 Census, the two Weiss children were shown as living with their Lapporte grandparents. One day Abe Weiss told his children he was going out for cigarettes and walked out of their lives for years. My Uncle Nate reminisced in 1986:

*"I was about 10 years old. There were six adults living there besides Ester and me. Yet there was never a feeling of being crowded. My grandfather would awaken first and make hot cereal for everyone and Eddie and Dave would dress and go to their men's furnishing store on 22<sup>nd</sup> and Wabash, a very rough neighborhood where Al Capone had his headquarters.*

*"My grandfather went to shul every morning after everyone left and came home before noon. After lunch he would take a nap and then go to shul for Mincha and Mayrev. When the boys had the store on Wabash, my grandmother would prepare a supper for them and my grandfather would take the streetcar and bring them their supper every Monday and Thursday night. They were very devoted to each other and to us.*

*"We lived on Turner Avenue for about 3 years and then moved to a larger apartment on Clifton Park Avenue. In that time the boys gave up their store and went into the manufacturing of ladies' undergarments. Nettie & Sadie worked in a tie factory.*

*"My grandfather was so proud of your mother. She would sit on his lap and play with his beard and he had nachas from her. Nettie had charge of all our needs and took care of us as good as any mother could have done. Our family never had wealth but was rich in culture. We had records of the famous opera singers<sup>5</sup>. We enjoyed listening in the evening. In retrospect I realize what a wonderful family I had."*



**Gittel Lapporte**  
**My great-grandmother**

Raising two young children in a world so different from Anikshet was quite a challenge for Reuven and Gittel Lapporte, who were then in their sixties. Neither of them knew much English—Yiddish was the language of the household. But they had an abundance of love for their children and grandchildren. Their love and lifestyle left Mom with a ready store of warm memories that she enjoyed sharing with me. I could never hear enough about life in her *zayde's* home. I especially liked to hear stories about Uncle Nate, who was apparently quite a trial to his grandparents.

Most of my mother and Uncle Nate's childhood memories were from the years they lived with the Lapportes. As adults they always felt very close to their aunts and uncles. Nate Weiss wrote, "If I led a decent life, I owe it all to the upbringing in such a fine

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<sup>5</sup>5. As a young woman, Sadie took voice lessons in the hope of becoming an opera singer. I'm not sure how long she studied music, but I can recall her singing on several occasions. At the prenuptial dinner before the wedding of Anne and Sy Lapporte in 1964, Sadie decided, much to Anne's dismay, to sing the famous love song, "I love you truly." Quite a spectacle for other guests in the restaurant!

environment.” Nettie became like a second mother to Mom and Uncle Nate. Recognizing Ester’s musical ability, Nettie took her to Chicago Musical College for piano lessons.

The Lapportes thought Abe Weiss and his brother Dave cheated Ester and Nate out of their rightful share of their mother’s estate. According to Dave Lapporte, Nettie wanted to sue her brother-in-law, but she was talked out of it by their cousin Sam Epstein (later Judge Epstein).

According to my mother, Gittel and Reuven tried to delay the marriages of their sons Dave and Eddie to prevent their oldest daughter Nettie from being labeled an “old maid.” Dave did not marry until 1925 when he was 32.

When Dave and Reva’s first son was born the following year, their niece Ester (my Mom) suggested, “Call him Allen...Alexander (his Hebrew name) is too big a name for such a little boy.” Dave and Reva later had two more children, Esther and Seymour.

Eddie married soon after Dave. I never knew him because he died from Hodgkins disease in 1935, leaving his wife Irene with two young boys, Jerry and Robert (named for his grandfather Reuven Aharon). I vaguely remember visiting the boys in an orphanage. After World War II, Irene and her sons moved to Los Angeles (both sons died young).

### **Our Close-Knit Family**

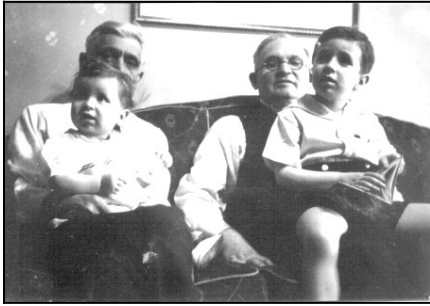
When I was little, Aunt Nettie lived with us for 3-4 years—she was my roommate. In addition to being my confidante, she often helped me get back in my mother’s good graces after I did something wrong. When Aunt Nettie retired and moved to California, Mother wrote to her every week, just as Dad wrote to his parents every week. After Mom died in 1956, I continued these weekly letters until Nettie and Sadie died in 1972.

Within the family everyone referred to Nettie and Sadie as “the girls.” When Nettie and Sadie came to visit us in Schenectady in 1966, these two little old ladies were still referring to themselves as “we girls.”

Nettie and Sadie were as different as two sisters could be. Nettie was serious, bossy, and practical. Sadie was a fun-loving romantic who always tried to keep everyone happy. She was married for a short time when she was in her forties. Her husband, Abe Bernstein, owned a 3-flat building that would have been a great investment except that it resembled the leaning tower of Pisa—tipped and increasingly tipping. Not long thereafter, Abe Bernstein died in bed, leaving Sadie alone again and feeling responsible for his death.

Apartments were almost impossible to find during the World War II years, and Aunt Sadie invited Nate and Rose to live with her. I remember seeing Gail as a new baby at Aunt Sadie’s house. After Nate and Rose moved out, Nettie moved in.

When Sadie retired she moved to Los Angeles, where the weather was milder and the health benefits were more generous. Nettie had to work after reaching age 65 because she had lied about her age upon entering the country. When she did retire, she followed Sadie to California. There they lived in the same building, but each had her own apartment—they recognized they needed space from each other.



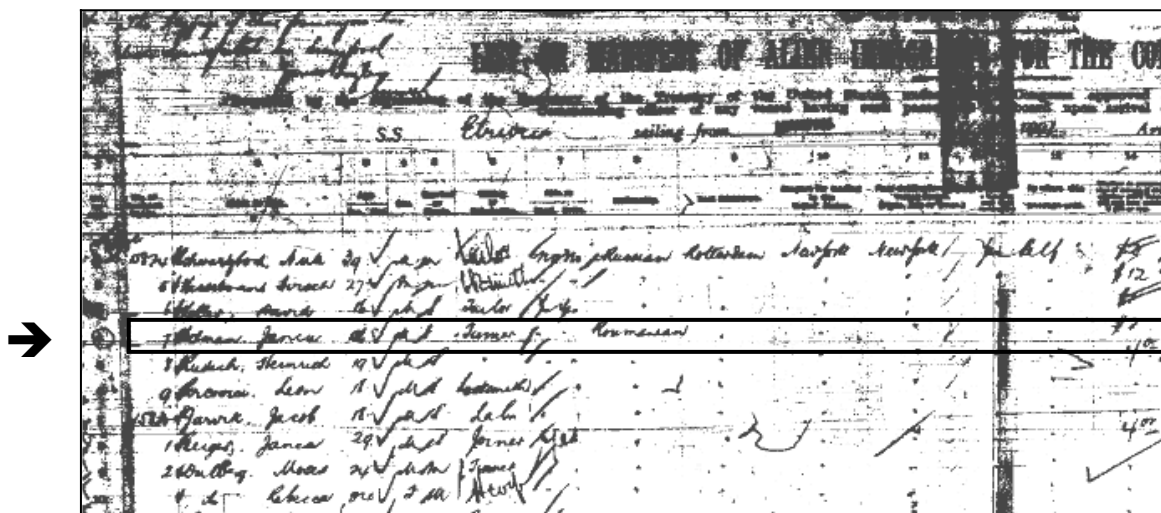
**Grandpa Weiss holding me,  
Grandpa Helman holding Bobby**  
December 1937

As for Grandpa Weiss, I have photos of myself sitting in his lap at the age of 1-3, but I have no real memories of him. He used to call me “Mahdie,” which was how I pronounced my name in those days. He lived with us for a short time. Then, after a stay in the Jewish Sanitarium in Winfield, he moved to Arizona for his health (he had TB). For many years Bob had a mounted set of antlers from Arizona hanging in his bedroom, a gift from Grandpa Weiss. Grandpa Weiss died in 1942, shortly before my cousin JoAnn Weiss was born and she was named for him.

### My Father's Side

The Helman family lived in Romania for several generations<sup>5</sup> before my grandfather Jacob Helman was born in 1873. I have a translation of the registration of death dated 1874 for Iosif Helmanu, a merchant. He was probably my grandfather's grandfather, as the researcher said there were no other Helman registrations in that town.

In addition to managing their own land, the Helmans acted as agents for absentee landlords. They used hired hands to help work the farm, so they must have lived fairly well. This is borne out by the fact that when my grandfather and his brother Ruben were called to serve in the army, they brought their own horses and served in the cavalry, which had a shorter service than foot soldiers. He was proud that his horse and saddle were of such quality that he rode in the royal entourage. He liked to tell how thrilled he was to see the Emperor Franz Josef up close!



<sup>5</sup>. When surnames first appeared in the Romanian census in 1808, the name Holman was one of 750 such names.

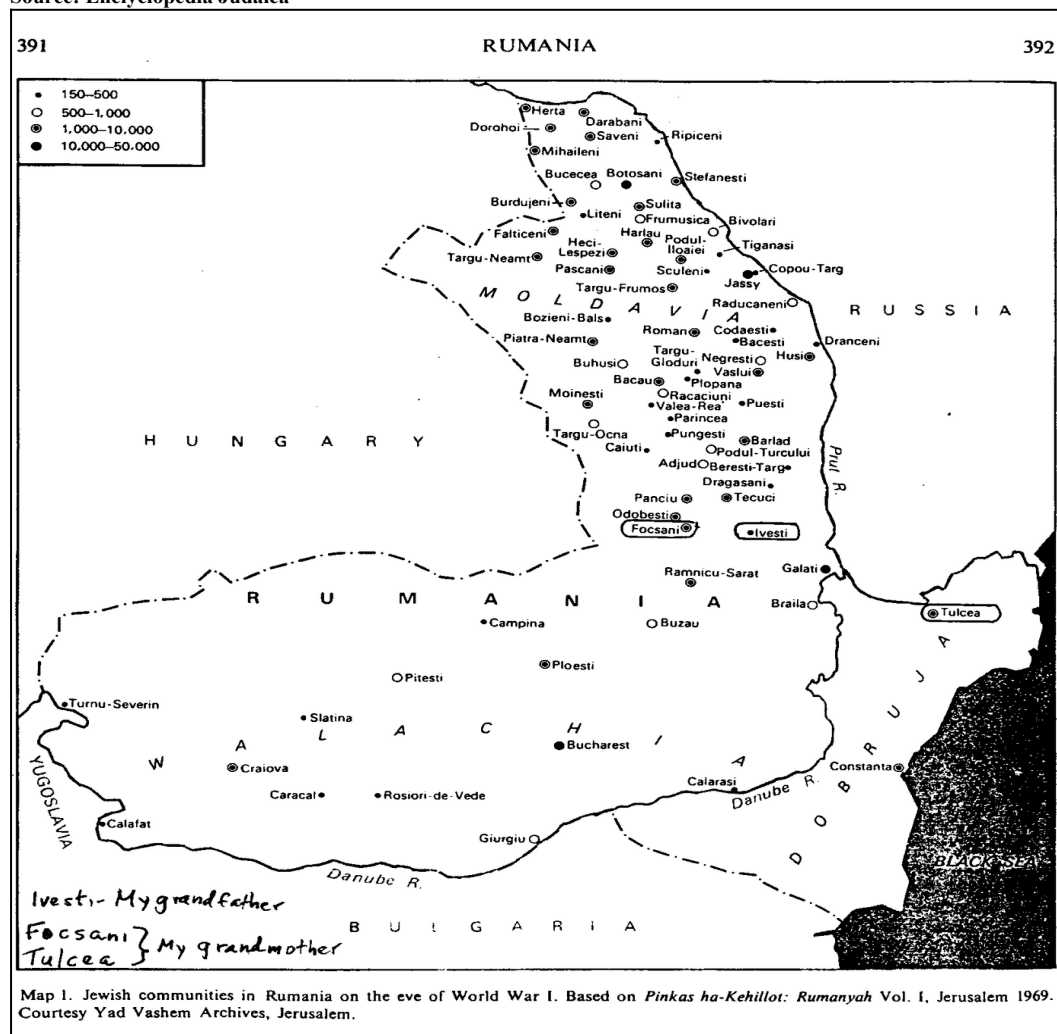


After three or four years of army service, Jacob and Ruben set up a general store in Ivesti or another small town nearby. Romania was notorious for its anti-Semitism, and—despite the fact that the Helman brothers were veterans—the store was looted and burned. This convinced them that they had no future in Romania. Like so many of their countrymen, they decided to emigrate to the U.S. Although Jacob had been a farmer and merchant in Romania, he listed his occupation on the ship manifest, his citizenship papers, and both the 1910 and 1920 census as a “tinner.”

## Jacob Helman Comes To America

Jacob came to America via Rotterdam and Liverpool at the age of 28. His older brother Ruben met him in New York on July 25, 1901 (See copy of ship roster). Jacob signed the ship register with his Romanian name, Jançu. Shortly after arriving, he went to Champaign, Ill., to work the general store of some “*landsmen*.” It soon became apparent that they wanted him to marry their daughter, so he left for Chicago.

Source: Encyclopaedia Judaica



In Chicago Jacob became active in the Jewish Romanian club and was one of the founders of Chicago's Romanian congregation.<sup>6</sup> When the congregation's leaders invited the touring Queen Marie of Romania to visit the synagogue, he resigned in disgust. How could the *shul* honor the leader of a country that didn't want or protect its Jews? Grandpa couldn't stand the hypocrisy and lost interest in the synagogue he helped start.

Jacob strongly held to Jewish traditions and put on *tefillin* every day while his mother-in-law the *rebbitzin* lived with him and his wife Tillie. Much later, after the birth of a daughter to his granddaughter Judy Bernard Weiss (Auntie Anne's daughter), he went to the synagogue in Miami Beach to give his new great-granddaughter a Hebrew name at the first opportunity.

Jacob's older brother Ruben, who had changed his last name to Hillman, got married in Chicago and had four children (Al, Elmer, Della, and Louis). My parents were friendly with Lou Hillman and his wife Belle. Ruben's marriage ended in divorce and he moved back to New York. Grandpa corresponded regularly with his brother in Yiddish, frequently sending messages back and forth for the Hillman children, who, like their Helman cousins, were too Americanized to know how to read or write Yiddish. Grandpa also had twin sisters, one of whom went to Israel (the mother of Shimon Berman and grandmother of Yitzhak and Mira, who Alan, Saul, and Steve met in Ness Ziona).

### **My Grandmother's Parents**

My father's mother Toba and her sister Anna were the daughters of Nachum and Sara Wolitzer. Both Nachum and Sara had been widowed; he had four grown sons and she had a daughter aged 15 when they married. Sara came from a long line of rabbis. Her father had been smuggled out of Russia to pursue a rabbinical career in Romania and ultimately headed a yeshiva in the town of Focsani—a town of close to 25,000, with about 6,000 Jews in 1899. According to the *Encyclopedia Judaica*,<sup>7</sup> Focsani was in a wine-growing region. It was also a center of anti-Jewish hostility.

I'm told the more advanced students at the yeshiva learned in the rabbi's home...providing an opportunity to see and be seen by the rabbi's daughter(s). Sara caught the eye of several of her father's students, including one who later became very famous—Solomon Schechter. Think of how different this family tale would have been if she hadn't rejected him!

A brief digression: I don't know whether Schechter's reported slovenly ways bothered Sara or whether she simply was not willing to leave for distant places at the

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<sup>6</sup>6. One of his good friends from the club and shul was Adolph Bernard. Adolph signed Jacob's citizenship papers as a reference, and he and his wife participated in my grandparents' wedding. Adolph and Helen Bernard had two sons; Eli, the youngest, married my father's sister Anne. Having no daughters, the Bernards doted on my aunt Anne as a child.

<sup>7</sup>7. My grandmother's birth certificate carries the notation that she was under Austrian protection. People in this category, usually in business or some elevated status, were known as "sudits"; I don't know why my grandmother rated Austrian protection. One possibility—one of her parents may have been born where Romania was once part of the Holy Roman Empire.

tender age of 14. A gifted student, Solomon Schechter (1847-1915) went to Lemberg for advanced studies, leaving his family home in Focsani in 1864 at the age of 17.

Solomon Schechter made such a name for himself as a Talmud scholar in Lemberg, he was offered a position in Jews College at Cambridge University in England in 1887. While there he became famous for “discovering” the Cairo *Genizah* and bringing the contents back to Cambridge University for further study. In 1902 he was invited to New York to head what is now the Jewish Theological Seminary, and he became one of the founders of Conservative Judaism.

Back to Sara’s story: She married Rabbi Abramson, one of her father’s students, several years later. Unfortunately Rabbi Abramson died quite young, leaving his young widow to raise their small daughter alone.<sup>8,9</sup> When this daughter was about fifteen, Rabbi Nachum Wolitzer, a widower who had studied and possibly taught in the Focsani yeshiva, returned to marry the young woman he had probably watched growing up. Nachum was 19 years older than Sara. Considering the times, this might have been an arranged match to free the Focsani community from responsibility for the widowed *rebbetzen*...or he may have admired Sara from his days of study with her father.

Rabbi Nachum Wolitzer moved to the nearby town of Tulcea, Romania, in about 1878 to become the rabbi, teacher, and head of the Tulcea Beth Din (religious court). Sara moved to Tulcea with Nachum after their marriage and I suspect her Abrahamson daughter was married at about the same time as her married name was Tulceanu (Romanian name meaning from Tulcea).

Nachum and Sara Wolitzer had two daughters born in Tulcea—Toby, my grandmother, Tova in Hebrew (born in 1883) and Anna (born in 1885). My father, Nathan (Nachum in Hebrew) Woltzer Helman, was named for his grandfather.

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<sup>8</sup>. The marriage of Sara and Rabbi Abramson produced a daughter who was 16 years older than my grandmother. This daughter also married quite young (not unusual in those days) and had 8 children—the Tulceanus. It must have been an unhappy situation for she advised her offspring not to marry! And most heeded her advice. All were highly educated. The older two—Jancu and Lazar—came to Chicago when they were 14 and 16. They lived with my great-aunt Anna Loebner and her husband Jim (editor of a Jewish paper) for a year and attended school to learn English. They preferred living in Romania and returned after a year. Auntie Anne remembers writing to them once a month in English, enclosing the Loebner's newspapers and magazines to help them keep up their English. After the war, three of them made their way to Israel—Lazar, Azaria, Judith—and received help from my Dad. The youngest studied dentistry in Paris, fought in Resistance, became a citizen of France, and married a French woman.

<sup>9</sup>. The youngest of Rabbi Wolitzer's four sons, Abraham, came to the U.S. after World War I. My Dad's sister Anne remembers that he spoke about his life in Paris during the war. He had a son and daughter-in-law in Chicago who had three children about the same ages as Anna, Nathan, and Dorothy. One of the brothers went to Germany and another to North Africa. After World War I, my grandmother found some Wolitzer cousins in Philadelphia and Newark—called Waltzer or Walters. She went there alone by train (quite a trek for a woman at that time), and said they were nice to her.

ב"ה יום י' עש"ק צדקה עקב כ"ב אב תר"ג טולטשע (אזאזשע)

אורח ימים ושנות חיים צדקה ושלום לכבוד הרב הושע כסא' למשפט להורות דת ודין ראש וענה  
נדיב גייעי עוסק בצדקה צדיק לכל הדורשים. המה' המשפלת התורה כשת מו' פשה הלוי אב' ד'  
דק' קאנסטאנטינאפאל הצירה לפני מעש יכון שמו.

אנחנו תושבי פה מחנינו טולטשע הח' עתויתנו שטוחה לפני רוס מעלת כבודו עבוד האי  
חתא צניעה נחמדה הרבנית הזאת אשר נשארה גלמודה מצעלה הרב הענוה ה' נחום ואל' צער שה'  
חורה הוראה וא'ל במחנינו טולטשע חמשה עשר שנים. וצאת השנה הלך למנוחתו כבוד. ויהי נשאה עם  
ילדות בתולדות צעירות וחוסר צלי משען מזון ומח'  
ועתה העיר ותושבי מוצפת ומצבה אחרנית והסכמה צדעתה לנסוע לאה' להסתפח במשכן קדושים  
לצרות עם שארית שנותי.

י נא והשגיבו לכול תפילות דמעלת פנינו נא על אצלות דליות אצלה נפשות עדינות אש  
נשאר צלי מזון ומחיו. להחיותם וכלכלתם בכל הכרח הצרכותם. הן בהוצאות נסיבתם לדרכם בקודש. הן  
במקום אשר תושב עם עם היתומים וצלי תת אותם עטוים צדעב ח' להיותם נשגות כשרים ונאמנים  
ל' ולעבדיו העשקים בתורת אל חי חלקינו גול'ינו.

אלה דברי המדברים בצדקה מעתירים חנינה וחסד ואמת אנחנו צד'ל' תושבי מחנינו טולטשע  
הצאים בחתימת ידינו

שמעון חסד  
והרס חסד  
נחמיה מלך זלי אלוטול  
ח' ר. ח' ח' ח'  
גאון ר' ח' ח'  
נשיא י. ח' ח'



נחמיה מלך זלי אלוטול  
נשיא י. ח' ח' ח'  
גאון ר' ח' ח'  
ח' ח' ח' ח'  
ח' ח' ח' ח'

The elders of Tulcea wrote to the head rabbi in Constantinople (now Istanbul) asking him to help the newly widowed Sara take her children to Palestine (translation on page 38)

### The Wolitzer Women in Distress

When my grandmother was only 10, her father died in a freak accident. He had inadvertently been locked inside the *shul* one Shabbat afternoon. In trying to climb out a window, he fell down, severing his jugular vein.



**My great grandmother Sara Wolitzer**

Widowed for the second time, Sara decided to move to Palestine with her two younger daughters. Increasing anti-Semitism in Romania and the expulsion of Jewish children from the public schools that same year may have helped her decide to leave Romania. (See appended Focsani entry in *Encyclopedia Judaica*).

Sara's life had not been easy—widowed and left with one small child and now widowed again with two daughters age 8 and 10 and no means of support.

In 1995 I discovered a hand-written document in a box of photos in my Dad's apartment. It looked like it was written in Hebrew, but I couldn't read it because it was written in Rashi script. It was a letter from the elders Tulcea to the head of the Beth Din of Constantinople (now Istanbul), asking him to help Rabbi Wolitzer's widow with kosher food, etc. on her journey to the Holy Land. Sara and her daughters sailed from Tulcea, a port on the Danube, but they only got as

far as Constantinople, on the other side of the Black Sea. An epidemic in Constantinople prevented them from going any further.

Sara and her daughters returned to Romania and made a new start in Bucharest, where Toba (my grandmother-to-be) was apprenticed to a dressmaker and her sister Anna to a milliner.

### **The Move to America**

Even though they became quite skilled in their trades, the two sisters realized that they could not earn enough to support themselves and their mother and also save for their dowries. They were probably concerned about getting past the age young women married in that culture. From family and friends they'd heard that America had an abundance of work opportunities as well as Jewish bachelors...plus, a woman could make a good marriage in America without a dowry. With the advent of cheap steamship fares, the sisters decided to emigrate to the U.S.

They got financial help from a Paris-based organization known as the Jewish Colonization Association and from B'nai Brith in Chicago (See letter on page 39). In 1903 the two sisters went by train to Hamburg and thence to the U.S. Another train brought them to *landsleit* (people from their town) in Chicago who took them in.

As soon as the two young women were able to support themselves they got their own apartment and encouraged their mother to join them. Sara wrote a letter to the Jewish Colonization Association in Paris (See appended letter), asking for money to join her daughters as soon as possible. With their assistance she hoped to bring two of Nachum's grandchildren from his first marriage. She eventually came alone—probably with money from her two daughters—and lived with them for close to ten years.

When my grandmother came through Ellis Island, she was told that Toby (Tybie in Yiddish, Tovah in Hebrew) was a man's name. At that point, she became Tillie. Later, she learned that Tillie was a nickname for Mathilda, and that was how she used to sign letters.



**Tillie and Jacob Helman 1905**  
**My father's parents**

### **My Grandparents Meet and Marry**

My grandparents were introduced to each other by a mutual friend in Chicago's Romanian Jewish community. According to my aunt, my grandfather, now called "Jack" by his friends, had heard about my grandmother in Romania—they come from the same general area (See map). They married in 1905 when she was 22 and he was 32 (for some reason, the marriage license shows his age as 29). As Jacob was active in the social and political life of the Jewish community the wedding was a large one.

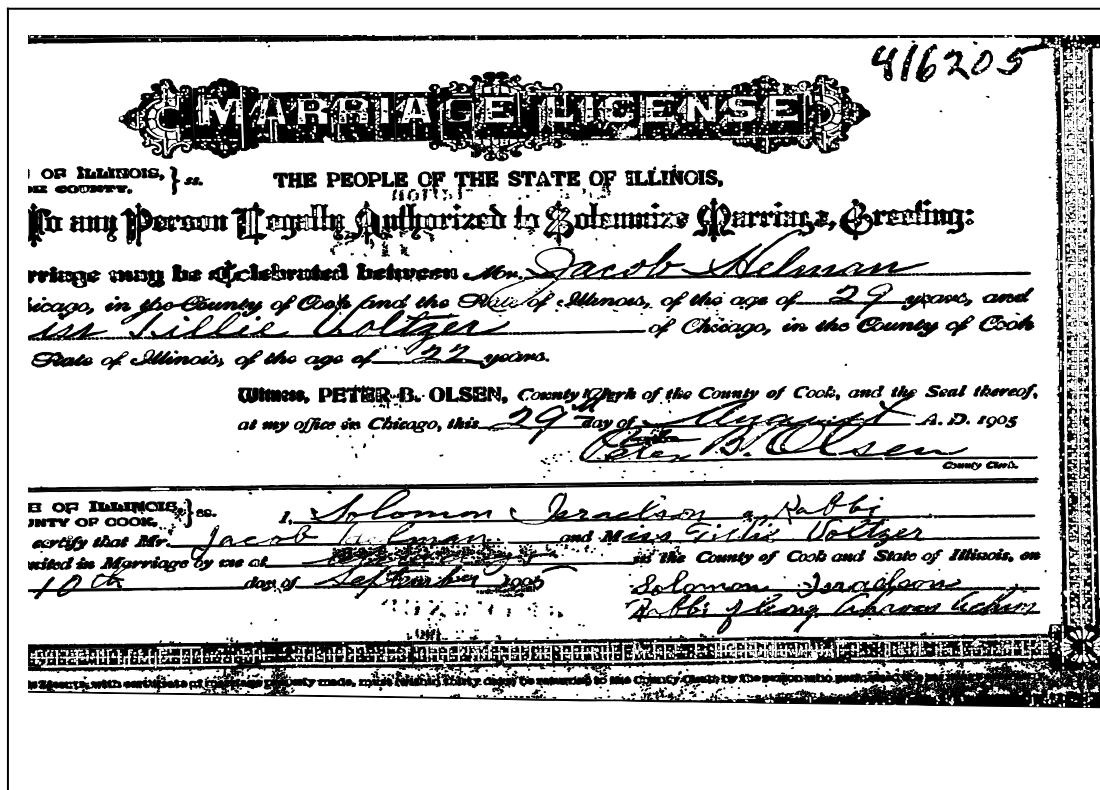
My grandparents were opposites in many ways. My grandmother was tall and had an aristocratic presence; she stood several inches taller than my grandfather. She was proud of her family's rabbinic background and considered herself an

intellectual and a refined "city person." In contrast, he was a stocky, good-natured, hard-working man who would have preferred to live in a small town.

After they married, Jacob moved into the apartment Tillie shared with her sister Anna and her mother. Before too long, Anna, Tillie's younger sister, married Jim Loebner, a writer for one of the Jewish newspapers. The Loebners had three sons—Nathan,<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup>10. Nathan Loebner became severely depressed and lived most of his life in a state mental hospital in southern Illinois.



Bernard, and Medill (probably named for Joseph Medill, a famous journalist). The two sisters were always very close, celebrating holidays together and, at one point, sharing an apartment.

### The Helman Household in Chicago

In an era before disposable diapers, washing machines, and prepared foods, my grandmother had three children in three years: Anne, Nathan, and Dorothy.<sup>11</sup>

My Dad's sister Anne remembered helping her grandma Sara learn enough English to do the family's shopping and errands. Sara would speak to her granddaughter in Yiddish and Anne would speak to her grandma in English.

My Aunt Anne shared a bed with Grandma Sara and had fond memories of her. Sara Wolitzer returned to Romania to help her oldest daughter (from her first marriage) in 1914. Stranded there during World War I, she died from diabetes.<sup>12</sup> My aunt remembered her mother (my Grandma) corresponding regularly with

<sup>11</sup>11. When my cousin Natalie had two small children just 26 months apart, she recalls our grandmother discussing the difficulties of having closely spaced children. Grandma told Natalie that after her third child was born she sought contraceptive advice and perhaps Natalie should do so as well.

<sup>12</sup>12. Insulin wouldn't be developed for another decade. My aunt Anne also became a diabetic in later years.

her sister in Romania, never mentioning that she was a half-sister, Sara's daughter from her first marriage.

When Nate and his sisters were in their teens, Jacob heard about a *landtsman* who wanted to sell a general store in a small town in North Dakota. He jumped at the chance to fulfill his dream of living in a small town like the one he grew up in. He spent part of a year scouting out opportunities in North Dakota and Alberta, Canada.

This would have been a very different story if they had moved to North Dakota. But Grandma was dead set against such a drastic change. While Grandpa may have



**My grandparents, Jacob and Tillie Helman**

romanticized life in a small town, she knew that Chicago offered the family many more social and cultural opportunities. Like most Jewish mothers of teen-aged children, she didn't want to move to a place with so few Jews.

For many years my grandfather worked as a tinsmith in factories, repairing industrial machinery; judging by my Dad's comment that they moved every few years, his employment may have been erratic. During World War I, he found work in a shipyard in Newport News, Virginia. Eventually he got a job repairing trucks and equipment in the main Post Office garage in Chicago.

With a shortage of qualified mechanics during World War II, the Post Office was glad Grandpa was willing to keep working after reaching the usual retirement age of 65.



When it became obvious he was no longer the mechanic he had been, he was made a watchman. He retired in 1944 at the age of 71 and my grandparents moved to Miami Beach. Dad and his sister Anne sent them money every month to augment Grandpa's pension.

Whether it was the well-known Romanian affinity for wine, family tradition, or Prohibition, when the sale of wine and liquor was prohibited, I don't know, but Grandpa Helman used to make his own wine in a barrel. My mother described the first time she had dinner at the Helmans: "I could hardly believe my eyes. They were drinking wine from water glasses! My family used shot glasses for wine." When I asked my grandfather about it, he explained that in Europe people were not sure whether the water was fit to drink... so they drank wine.

### **Grandma Helman Sets Up Shop**

Right from the beginning Grandma Helman worked very hard to try to bring more money into the household. Even when her children were quite young she ran a series of small business out of the home. Skilled as a dressmaker, she fashioned dresses for ladies, making her own patterns. According to Dad, it was her ability to cut as well as sew without a pattern that set his mother apart from other dressmakers.

My aunt told me that once when my grandfather was out of work, my grandmother took a job at one of the fashionable shops on North Michigan Avenue. The practice in those days was for the shops to buy one dress from European designers and hire local dressmakers to make paper patterns in a full range of sizes.

Grandma also took in boarders, something I first learned of when I saw the census of 1910, showing a household of Jacob, Tillie, the three children, her mother Sara Wolitzer, and the boarder. Although Dad never mentioned a boarder, he immediately recognized the name and commented that that man had lived with them for years. The family moved every few years—not unusual in those days. One apartment was right across the street from a school and my grandmother sold candy and notions through the ground floor window.



**Grandpa Helman, Aunt Dorothy, Grandma, Auntie Anne, Nathan (my Dad), 1935**

as a saleslady. My aunt said her mother made all the clothes for herself, her daughters, and her sister—from petticoats to coats—usually from remnants.

During her children's high school years, Tillie Helman rented an empty shop that Jacob partitioned so they could live behind the store. Helman's Dry Goods (women's clothing) did well enough to justify expanding the shop, and the family moved to a larger apartment over the store. It was here that Nate got his first experience as an accountant—since he had taken bookkeeping in high school, he set up the books. Daughter Anne helped in the store

## **A Household of Many Languages**

My grandmother was so determined to speak like an American, she insisted on speaking only English to her children. As a result, they could understand, but not speak Yiddish. She made a point of listening to the radio to improve her English. When she opened the dry goods store, she went to night school classes to further improve her English. She already knew Romanian, German, and Yiddish, but she realized she must become fluent in English too. Always interested in learning, she occasionally had her son Nate take her to hear Rabbi Solomon Goldman, a prominent Chicago rabbi, speak at Congregation Anshe Emet. (The same synagogue where my parents were married and my Dad's funeral was held.)

When they wanted to make sure the children couldn't understand, my grandparents spoke Romanian to each other—Dad called it their “secret language.” But they had no nostalgia for Romania and distanced themselves from their native land. In later years when travel was possible, Grandpa couldn't understand why anyone would want to go there.

## **Anti-Semitism and Hopes for the Future**

As a mechanic in the main Post Office garage in downtown Chicago, Grandpa Helman frequently came up against anti-Semitism. He dealt with it on two levels. When a co-worker made frequent anti-Semitic remarks, Grandpa would say, “Come here—I want to show you something.” Away from the crowd Grandpa would take his metal shears and show how easily he could cut a piece of metal with one hand... the implied threat usually brought him immediate respect and relief.

On another level, Grandpa kept trying for the big breakthrough financially—he liked to play the horses and always bought a chance in the Irish Sweepstakes. At one point, the promise of striking it rich in real estate lured him into making payments on a small lot outside the city limits of Chicago. After my grandparents moved to Florida we'd drive there every once in a while to see if any development was taking place. All we ever saw was someone else's cow grazing on Grandpa's land. When the area was developed, Grandpa held out for a better price. But he held out too long. The developer proceeded to box in Grandpa's lot. Then Dad realized that it made no sense to continue paying on the land-locked lot and he sold the property for less than the initial offer.

## **Retirement in Miami Beach**

Grandma Helman had spent several winters in Miami Beach. Several times she took one or more of the older granddaughters along —Natalie, Joann, and Shirley.



**Jacob and Tillie Helman, 1944**

When Grandpa retired at age 71 in 1944, they moved to Miami Beach. The following year we went by train to visit them for Pesach 1945. The train was crowded with GIs and we were among the few civilians on board.

My grandparents were in good health and enjoyed their retirement. Most days they walked several blocks to the beach where they enjoyed bathing in the ocean. Once in their apartment I was surprised to see Grandpa using the carpet sweeper—I'd never seen him do that! Grandpa explained, "Grandma is retired too. Now we share the housework."

After our initial train trip, our family vacation for the next ten years consisted of my father driving us to see my grandparents every summer. We'd stay in a hotel nearby in the now-historic Art Deco South Beach area and visit them every day—either meet them at the beach, take them out to dinner, or sit on the patio of their apartment building.

My grandmother used to make a mashed eggplant appetizer that I refused to taste because of its appearance, but I'm sure I'd love it now. When I'd get sunburned, my grandma would insist on patting me with vinegar—I remember how I hated to return to our hotel smelling like a salad.



**Dad and his parents Florida in 1946**

Every year my father brought the same gifts to his parents—a bottle of Scotch and a kosher salami, which he hung in the car to dry out on the drive down. They always were happy to see us but I could never understand why Grandma cried when we'd say goodbye (now, of course, I do). For several years my Aunt Dorothy shared an apartment with my grandparents. After she moved out, they had moved into a smaller, more affordable apartment. My parents took one look at their new apartment and helped my grandparents find a better apartment and moved them into it.

For some reason, my mother never felt fully accepted by her in-laws. However it was obvious she was a welcome visitor in Florida. My grandparents enjoyed speaking Yiddish with her—something they couldn't do with their own children. They said she spoke a "beautiful Yiddish."

## Natalie's Wedding



**My grandparents at Natalie's wedding 1946**

**She was 63 and he was 73**

When my cousin Natalie (their oldest granddaughter) got married in 1946, my grandparents took the train to Chicago from Florida and stayed with us for several weeks. Auntie Anne and Uncle Eli were, by our standards, quite well-to-do, and they planned a grand wedding at the Covenant Club—a Jewish social club for affluent families of Eastern European background (another club, the Standard Club, catered to the wealthier, German-Jewish elite).

Soon after they arrived my aunt took Grandma shopping for a dress. But Grandma, the former dressmaker, wasn't satisfied with anything she saw.

Over my aunt's objection, Grandma insisted on making her own gown. Dad rented a sewing machine for her and it was fascinating for me to watch my grandmother cut and sew the yards of brocade material into a lovely gown.

Grandma Helman was a handsome woman with regal posture. When she walked down the aisle, she looked so stunning, people actually gasped. I'm not the only one who remembers this. Decades later Natalie recalled, "I was the bride, but Grandma stole the show." Before returning to Miami Beach, Grandma took the dress apart and made a dress for Aunt Dorothy and a blouse for my mother.

During their stay I was struck by my grandfather's strength. I was trying to open a jar of jelly and no one could budge it, not even my Dad. Then I asked Grandpa and he was able to open it with his broad powerful hands, strengthened from years of sheetmetal work.

## Family Ties

My Aunt Dorothy moved to Pennsacola, Florida, when she married her second husband. Apparently trying to garner some time alone with her new husband, she placed Joann and Shirley in a boarding school. The girls were unhappy and wrote to Grandma and Grandpa, who rescued them from an unpleasant situation. When Dorothy's marriage failed, she and her daughters moved in with Grandpa and Grandma in Miami Beach, and they ran the household for her for several years.

Dad wrote to his parents every Sunday. Whenever he could, he got me to join him in this ritual. Grandma answered our letters point by point. Many years later my cousin Joann told me how hard Grandma worked on writing those letters, asking for help with spelling and re-copying each letter until it was just right.

### **The Passing of a Generation**

In 1954, Grandma came back to Chicago for surgery for cancer of the colon and Grandpa stayed with us. Grandpa was very devoted to her and used to spend all day at the hospital with her; in those days major surgery meant at least a 2-week stay in the hospital. Mother thought he needed a change of pace and offered to take his place at Grandma's bedside for a day. Grandpa accepted.

Telling no one what he planned to do on his day off, he took a series of buses to the racetrack (one of his favorite pastimes; as a former cavalryman, he considered himself an expert on horses). After it got dark, Dad was worried enough to call the police. It must have been about ten o'clock or even later when Grandpa strolled in. He'd had a wonderful day and couldn't understand why anyone would worry. After all, he'd lived in Chicago for most of his life and knew his way around (he was 85).

My Grandma returned to Florida and died later that year. After that Grandpa lived part of the year with Auntie Anne (then owner-manager of the Orleans Hotel in Miami Beach) and part of the year with Aunt Dorothy (then owner-manager of a hotel in Artesia, NM). He returned to Chicago every summer for a visit with my Dad, and my Dad usually went to see him during the year as well.

Grandpa was happy to dance with me at my wedding. My cousin Natalie told me that when my brother Bob was married in 1958 in Des Moines, Grandpa Helman insisted that Natalie and her husband Shel drive him from Chicago to Des Moines for the big event and told her to bring a picnic to eat on the trip, which they did.



**Dancing with Grandpa Helman, June 9, 1957.**

He enjoyed good health until his death in 1961. Two great-grandsons are named for my grandfather—Adam Jacob Helman and Steven Jacob Kravitz, as is one great-great-grandson, Ariel Jacob Newberger. Two great-granddaughters are named for my grandmother—my cousin Donald Bernard's daughter Toni and my cousin Judy Bernard Weiss Shayman's daughter Tamra.

Although my grandmother was in her early fifties when I was born, I always thought of her as an old lady. Now, with the same age difference between me and my grandchildren as my grandmother and me, I don't think she was old at all!

## **DOCUMENTS** (originals in my looseleaf binder)

1. Birth registration of Jancu Moise Helmanu (1873).
2. Birth registration of Toba Wolitzer (1883)
3. Death registration Nuham (Nachum) Wolitzeer (1893)
4. Letter from elders of Tulcea to Chief Rabbi of Constantinople (dated 1853 but actual date must have been 1893). Found in a box of photos in Nathan Helman's apartment, September 1995.
5. Ship roster for Jancu Helman (1901). National Archives, Washington, D.C.
6. Ship roster for "Fanni" [Tova] Wolitzer (1903). National Archives, Washington, D.C.
7. Letter from Sara Wolitzer asking the Jewish Colonization Association for money to join her daughters in Chicago (1903). Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.
8. Naturalization papers for Jacob Helman (1906). National Archives, Chicago, Ill.
9. Marriage license for Jacob Helman and Tillie Voltzer (1905). Here it is Voltzer, not Wolitzer. Cook County Clerk's Office, Chicago.
10. Marriage license for Abraham Weiss and Mollie Lappert (1905). Cook County Clerk's Office, Chicago.
11. Ship rosters for Malke (1903), Ruben, Gittel, Sadie Lopert (1908). National Archives, Washington, D.C.
12. Naturalization papers for Abraham Weiss (1912). Provided by Chuck Bernstein.
13. Death certificate of Mollie Weiss (1915). Cook County Clerk's Office, Chicago.
14. Death certificate of Gitel Lapporte (1933)
15. Jewish National Fund certificates purchased by my grandparents in the 1920s or 1930s
16. 1910 census page for Jacob Helman and family. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
17. 1920 census page for Jacob Helman and family. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
18. 1920 census page for the Lapporte family. National Archives, Washington, D.C.
19. Death certificate of Tillie Helman (1956)
20. Family history written by my mother's cousin Dave Baron.

## **Family Burial Sites in Chicago**

**Mathilda and Jacob Helman** (my grandparents); **Ester and Nathan Helman** (parents)  
Westlawn Cemetery, 7801 W. Montrose, Chicago, IL 60634

I-95 to Cicero Ave. exit. South to Foster Ave. Right on Foster. West 5 miles to Cumberland, Left to Montrose. Right to Cemetery—Section D, Block 5, Lot 8.

In gate, turn right. First left and halfway down Section D check markings on curb for Block 5. Big pink stone with HELMAN and four smaller individual markers.

## **Malke Rivka (Mollie) Weiss (11/1/15)**

Waldheim Cemetery, Roosevelt and Des Plaines Rds. (1200 South)

I-290 to Harlem exit on left. Left on Harlem to Roosevelt Road. Right on Roosevelt. Left on Des Plaines to Gate 16. (If no street parking, use Walmart lot across the street)

Walk through Gate 16—Anshe Knesses Israel #2. Behind Friedman/Ilserman Mausoleum walk down unpaved path to almost the end. Red granite stone with picture. 2B/ Row 112.

**Abraham Weiss** (1942) Gate 1...walk 100-200 feet on left.

Also in Waldheim: Edward Lapporte (brother of Mollie) Lieberman, Lapporte, Baron



## The All Lithuania Database

### Searching for Surname LOPERT

(D-M code 879300)

Displaying matching records 1 to 13 of 13

Run on Wednesday 16 January 2002 at 10:31:55

### Tax and Voters Lists

Surname	Given Name	Father	Age	Comments	Day	Month	Year	Town	Uyezd	Guberniya	Record / Publication	Page	Record	/
LOPERT / LONERT(?)	David	Tsemakh		Well-to-do			1892	Birzai	Panevezys	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers	13	259	1
LOPERT	Aron Movsha	Shimkha		Trade; Petit Bourgeois; 6 in family			1892	Panevezys	Panevezys	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers	96	135	1
LOPERT	Benjamin			Trade; Petit Bourgeois; 6 in family			1892	Panevezys	Panevezys	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers	97	193	1
LOPERT	Aron Movsha			draper's shop, petit bourgeois; 3 in family			1906	Panevezys	Panevezys	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers	49	93	1
LOPERT	Iazar Shimkha			trade, petit bourgeois; 4 in family			1906	Panevezys	Panevezys	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers	50	122	1
LOPERT	Benjamin			trade, petit bourgeois; 3 in family			1906	Panevezys	Panevezys	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers	51	182	1
LIBERT	Iosif			small proprietor, petit bourgeois; 3 in family			1906	Panevezys	Panevezys	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers	55	455	1
LOPERT	Rubin			salesman, petit bourgeois; 2 in family			1906	Panevezys	Panevezys	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers		760	1
LOPERT	Israel	Tsemakh					1903	Radviliskis	Siauliai	Kaunas	Rabbi Electors (2nd Prayer House)	7	23	1
LOPERT	Tsemakh	Mordkhel					1903	Radviliskis	Siauliai	Kaunas	Rabbi Electors (2nd Prayer House)	7	24	1
→	LOPERT	Tzemakh Yankel	David	well-to-do			1877	Seta	Ukmerge	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers		814	1
	LOPERT	David	Tzemakh Yankel				1877	Seta	Ukmerge	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers		815	1
→	LOPERT	Rubin Aron	Tzemakh Yankel				1877	Seta	Ukmerge	Kaunas	Box Taxpayers		816	1

This shows that the Loperts paid "box tax" (tax on kosher meat) in the town of Seta, Lithuania, in 1877. They may have moved from Seta to Aniksht after fires destroyed much of Seta.  
Tzemach was my great-great-grandfather and his son Rubin was my great-grandfather



REGISTRU ȘTARII CIVILE  
PENTRU NASCUTI.

No. 57.

Actul de naștere

Janču Helmanu

S-au născut una mi s-a născut, capăt  
ei, și trîi, lină crămbre, elis' pînă pînă  
decu, ora decu dimineața; actul de  
naștere al lui Janču d. decu Pîr  
Rătescu; născut la dănu e pred  
ei crămbre în casa părinti, lăru  
sîr din comuna Târgu Pîreriea flori  
fîr al lui mîră helmanu d. anu pînă  
trîndec, și cînu, și al mîră helman  
d. anu trîi, decu și cînu, d. mîră  
spiculant, și dămnicile, în comu  
na Târgu Pîreriea flori; d. pînă  
națica făcută d. tatăl, cîr mîră  
tatăl capila; cîr tîmălu mîră  
și mîră mîră, d. anu pînă  
și al dăile el tîră cîr tîră  
pînă, și d. d. mîră  
lănt, și dămnicile, în comu  
Târgu Pîreriea flori, și în co  
li tatăl d. mîră, cîr au subscris  
acest act d. pînă lămă  
d. tîră în pînă cîr mîră  
ntili. - Căstătu d. pînă lămă  
Târgu Pîreriea flori, și  
mîră Târgu Pîreriea flori, și  
a hîră al tîră mîră.

## **Translation of the 1873 birth registration of my grandfather**

**Jançu Moisa Helmanu**

### REGISTER FOR BIRTHS

No. 51              Birth Certificate

1873 November 14, 10 a.m. Birth certificate of Jançu Moisa, male, born on November 12 in the house of his parents from Targu Biserica Florii, son of Moisa Helmanu, 45 years old, and Hana Helmanu, 35, merchants, residents in Targu Biserica Florii. Declaration made by the father who presented us the child.

Witnesses: Smair Mincear, 40, and Zail Diani, 42, both merchants, residing in Targu Biserica Florii, neighbors, who signed together with us Parachiv Rales, Mayor and Registrar.

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Original found in State Archives of Galati, Romania, January 1997 by Prof. Ladislav Gyemant. Translated from Romanian by Prof. Gyemant.

# REGISTRU STAREI CIVILE PENTRU NASCUTI

N<sup>o</sup> 263

Acti

Tova Dr. Wolitzer  
Israelita  
Austro-Hungary

Am amut una mie opt sute optzeci și trei, luna  
April, ziua douăzeci și cinci, ora șase amte  
meridianas. Act de naștere a Tovei de sexul  
femeie. Israelită, născută ieri ora trece  
punct meridian în Tulcea, în casa părinților  
sei din strada General Angelescu N<sup>o</sup> 48.  
Coloza de Roșu; fiica lui Nuhim J. Wolitzer  
în stare de cincideci și două ani. Născută  
și a găsii Larra N. Wolitzer în stare de treizeci  
și trei ani, ambii domiciliati în Tulcea. Dup.  
declarațiunea făcută de totot. Marturi au fost:  
M. Riven H. Haham în stare de douăzeci și  
patru ani. Haham și Dr. Alter S. Melmanov  
în stare de treizeci și opt ani. Muncitor, ambii  
domiciliati în Tulcea, care au subscris  
acert act în prezența cu declarantale, după ce  
li s-a citit de noi Athanasie Valasoglu. Orig.  
torul Primarului și delegat Officier Stăru  
Căpitanul Tulcea

Nachum son Smil Wolitzer

ויראנו את הילד

הילד נראה בריא

Officier Stăru Căpitan Delegat A. Valasoglu

## Translation of 1883 birth registration of my grandmother

**Toba Volitzer**

Israelitas    Austro-Ungary\*

### REGISTER FOR BIRTHS

No. 263                      Birth Certificate

1883 April 25, 6 a.m. Birth certificate of Tobai, female, Jewish, born yesterday, 3 p.m. in Tulcea, in the house of her parents, General Angelescuc Str. No. 48, Red District, daughter of Nachum S. Volitzer, 52, Rabbi, and Sarra N. Volitzer, 33, both residents in Tulcea. Declaration made by the father. Witnesses: Riven H. Haham, 24, ritual butcher, and Alter I. Meilmon, 38, worker, both residing in Tulcea, who signed together with us Athanase Valasoglu, vice-mayor and Registrar of Tulcea.

Signed: Nachum sin S'mil Volitzer

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Original found in State Archives of Tulcea, Romania, April 1997 by Prof. Ladislav Gyemant. Translated from Romanian by Prof. Gyemant.

\* I am not sure what the significance of this is, but after seeing no mention of Austria on the marriage registration of Nahum's daughter from his first marriage, it is apparent that Toba inherited this status from her mother. According to Prof. Gyemant, this shows that she, or her parents, was under the protection of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at a time when Tulcea was part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire. This could mean that he was a citizen of Austro-Hungary for any number of reasons.

## **Translation of letter from leaders of Tulcea to Chief Rabbi of Constantinople asking him to help my great-grandmother Sara Wolitzer travel to the Holy Land in 1893 with her daughters**

Friday, just before Shabbat Parsha Ekev, 22 Av, 5613\*, Tulcea, Dubrushia

Long days and years of life with blessing and peace for the rabbi at the head of the Jewish court to teach Jewish religion and law, the head and leader philanthropist who deals with charity to all those who seek. Moshe Halevi, head of a bet din of the holy community of the capital Constantinople, and may his name be blessed.

We the citizens of Tulcea have a request to his excellence with regard to the modest woman rebetzin who was left widowed from her husband the late Rabbi Nachum Wolitzer who was a teacher and also a head of the bet din in Tulcea. He had the position for fifteen years and this year he died. She was left with young daughters lacking support to sustain her and now it is her last wish to travel to the holy land to join with the rest of the holy ones and to spend the rest of her years there.

Presently there is the bitter tear of hers that there are three delicate souls who were left without food or sustenance both in terms of travel expenses on their holy trip and also in the state of settling the orphans without letting them, G-d forbid, go in hunger, instead to remain kosher souls who will be spending their time in the work of G-d who is our lot and our Redeemer. These are the words of those who speak with righteousness and who plead with compassion, grace, and truth. We, the citizens of Tulcea, together with the signatures of our hands.

[official communal seal] 12 signatures

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Translated from Hebrew in Rashi script by Steven Kravitz

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\* The year 5613 corresponds to 1853 in our calendar. This must be a scribal error since my grandmother, one of the orphans described, was born in 1883 and her father Nachum Wolitzer died when she was about ten years old, which would make the correct year 1893. A check with the Jewish calendar for 1853 and 1893 revealed that the 22 of Av fell on Friday in both years.

Original found in a box of photographs in my Dad's apartment in 1995.

## Translation of letter from Sara Wolitzer to Jewish Colonization Association asking for help in coming to Chicago

Focsani the 20 July 1903

Monsieur President  
Jewish Colonization Association  
Rue Pasquier 2, Paris

Monsieur President—Allow me to express to you my respectful thanks for having facilitated the emigration of my two daughters, for having sent them to Chicago last February at the expense of B'nai Brith for one of them with a contribution on my part of 100 francs for the other.

I received a letter from the B'nai Brith of Chicago which advised me that my daughters found work there and that all they needed for their happiness to be complete was for their mother to be there. All they earn is sufficient for their daily expenses, but they can't save any money to help their family still in Europe. It would be wonderful if I, their mother, was there. The advantage would be two-fold: they would be better taken care of and I would be delivered from my state of misery.

It is with these considerations that I humbly ask you the favor of according me emigration to Chicago, and also my two grandsons, ages 14 and 11, sons of Monsieur Israel Gehalfener. They are robust children and very intelligent. Their father, being very poor, is very happy when he can feed his other children who stay here, and he is not in a position to think of the future of his two sons who, in America, could earn a good living. I have raised the sum of 250 francs as a contribution toward the expense of our emigration.

I hope, Mr. President, that after considering the reasons I just gave, you will kindly accord emigration to Chicago to the widow Sara Wolitzer, 50 years old, Jacques Gehalfener\*, 14 years old and Lazar Gehalfener\* 11 years old.

Mr. President with greatest respectfulness.

Rebitzen Sara Wolitzer

Address: Israel Gehalfener, Str. Mare 325, Focsani

The Israelite Community of Focsani sees the petition of the widow Sara Wolitzer and hereby confirms that said petition merits being taken into consideration.

{official Seal}	Le President (illegible signature)
	Le Secretary (illegible signature)

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Translated from French. Original in Central Archives of the History of the Jewish People in Jerusalem.

\* When a Romanian researcher sent me a copy of the civil marriage registration of Alta Wolitzer to Israel Gheolfener, I realized that these are the sons of Nachum's daughter by his first wife, Sara's step-grandsons.

JUDETUL TULCEA  
 PRIMĂRIA MUN. TULCEA  
 COMITETUL (BIROUL) EXECUTIV  
 Nr. 20497 Starea civilă 17.04.1997  
 127-779 / 24.04.1997

Către, PRIMĂRIA MUN. GALATI  
 1101N din 8.04.1997

Vă trimitem extrasul solicitat de dv. cu adresa nr. \_\_\_\_\_ din \_\_\_\_\_

EXTRAS DE DECES  
 NUMAI PENTRU UZUL ORGANELOR DE STAT

Numele de familie WOLITZER prenumele NAHAM  
 (litere mari de tipar) (litere mari de tipar)

Numele de familie și prenumele tatălui \_\_\_\_\_  
 (litere mari de tipar)

Numele de familie și prenumele mamei \_\_\_\_\_  
 (litere mari de tipar)

Locul și data nașterii VARSA 01.01.  
 (localitatea, județul, anul, luna și ziua)

Codul numeric personal: \_\_\_\_\_

Sexul hărțăre S A A L L Z Z N N N N N C

Data decesului: Anul 1893 luna februarie ziua 25  
 Locul decesului TULCEA str. Miceșel nr. 4 et. \_\_\_\_\_ apart. \_\_\_\_\_  
 județul TULCEA

Cauza decesului \_\_\_\_\_

C.G. nr. 853/86 50-1-18, A5, 12, Lei 0,105. Ed. 1988

Ultimul domiciliu: Localitatea TULCEA  
 str. Miceșel nr. 4

Decesul a fost înregistrat la Comitetul (Biroul) executiv al PRIMĂRII MUN. TULCEA  
 județul TULCEA în registrul stării civile la nr. 79 din anul 1893  
 luna februarie ziua 26

MENTIUNI

Se certifică de noi exactitatea prezentului extras întocmit astăzi 17.04.1997

OFICIUL STĂRII CIVILE

50-1-18, A5, 12, Lei 0,105. Ed. 1988

No. 46

Form 2293

TRIPLICATE  
(To be given to the person making  
the Declaration)

# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Department of Commerce and Labor  
BUREAU OF IMMIGRATION AND NATURALIZATION  
DIVISION OF NATURALIZATION

## DECLARATION OF INTENTION

(Invalid for all purposes seven years after the date hereof)

State of Illinois  
County of Franklin ss: In the Illinois Court  
of Franklin

Abraham Oleiss, aged 28 years,  
occupation Salesman, do declare on oath that my personal  
description is: Color White, complexion Fair, height 5 feet 9 inches,  
weight 147 pounds, color of hair Black, color of eyes Brown  
other visible distinctive marks none

I was born in Holamichova, Galicia  
Austria, on the 15 day of October, anno  
Domini 1881; I now reside at 10714 Norrence Av

I emigrated to the United States of America from Hamburg, Ger  
on the vessel Cant Remember; my last  
foreign residence was Holamichova, Galicia Austria  
(If the alien arrived in this country by vessel, the character of conveyance or name of transportation company should be given.)

It is my bona fide intention to renounce forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign  
prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to  
Francis Joseph Emperor of Austria, of which I am now a subject

arrived at the port of New York, in the  
State of New York, on or about the 15 day  
of July, anno Domini 1899

I am not an anarchist; I am not a  
polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy; and it is my intention in good faith  
to become a citizen of the United States of America and to permanently reside therein:

SO HELP ME GOD.

Abraham Oleiss  
(Original signature of declarant.)

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 11  
day of April, anno Domini 1910

[SEAL.]

By J. M. Genna Clerk.  
Court.

11-2526



# UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

## PETITION FOR NATURALIZATION

To the Honorable the United States Court of  
Southern District of Illinois Court of

The petition of Abraham Weiss hereby filed, respectfully sheweth:

First. My place of residence is 16714 T.O. Avenue Chicago, Illinois.  
 (Give number, street, city or town, and State.)

Second. My occupation is Clothing Merchant

Third. I was born on the 15 day of Oct anno Domini 1881 at Malarnichova Austria

Fourth. I emigrated to the United States from Hamburg Germany on or about the 10 day of July anno Domini 1899 and arrived in the United States at the port of New York on the 15 day of July anno Domini 1899 on the vessel Deutch Emmer  
 (If the alien arrived otherwise than by vessel, the character of conveyance or name of transportation company should be given.)

Fifth. I declared my intention to become a citizen of the United States on the 11 day of Apr anno Domini 1916  
 at Chicago in the Cook County, Illinois Court of

Sixth. I am married. My wife's name is Mollie She was born Nov 10 Russia and now resides at Chicago, Illinois  
 (Give number, street, city or town, and State.)

I have 7 children, and the names, date and place of birth, and place of residence of each of said children is as follows:  
Ernest born Jan 15 1907  
Nathan born Oct 17 1910  
Both born in and now residing at Chicago, Illinois.

Seventh. I am not a disbeliever in or opposed to organized government or a member of or affiliated with any organization or body of persons teaching disbelief in or opposed to organized government. I am not a polygamist nor a believer in the practice of polygamy. I am attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and it is my intention to become a citizen of the United States and to renounce absolutely and forever all allegiance and fidelity to any foreign prince, potentate, state, or sovereignty, and particularly to Francis Joseph Emperor of Austria and Apostolic King of Hungary of whom at this time I am a subject, and it is my intention to reside permanently in the United States.

Eighth. I am able to speak the English language.

Ninth. I have resided continuously in the United States of America for the term of five years at least, immediately preceding the date of this petition, to wit, since the 15 day of July anno Domini 1899, and in the State of ILLINOIS continuously next preceding the date of this petition, since the 15 day of July anno Domini 1899, being a residence within this State of at least one year next preceding the date of this petition.

Tenth. I have not heretofore made petition for citizenship to any court. (I made petition for citizenship to the \_\_\_\_\_ Court of \_\_\_\_\_ on the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ anno Domini \_\_\_\_\_ and the petition was denied by the said Court for the following reasons and causes, to wit: \_\_\_\_\_ and the cause of each denial has been cured or removed.)

Attached hereto and made a part of this petition is my declaration of intention to become a citizen of the United States and the certificate from the Department of Commerce and Labor, together with my affidavit and the affidavits of the two verifying witnesses therein, required by law. Wherefore your petitioner prays that he may be admitted a citizen of the United States of America.

Declaration of Intention and Certificate of Landing from Department of Commerce and Labor filed this 15 day of Apr 1912

### AFFIDAVITS OF PETITIONER AND WITNESSES.

United States Court of the United States  
 Southern District of Illinois

The above-named petitioner being duly sworn, deposes and says that he is the petitioner in the above-entitled proceedings; that he has read the foregoing petition and knows the contents thereof; that the said petition is signed with his full, true name; that the same is true of his own knowledge except as to matters therein stated to be alleged upon information and belief, and that as to those matters he believes it to be true.

and Samuel Kroll occupation Clothing residing at 16714 T.O. Avenue  
 each being severally, duly, and respectively sworn, deposes and says that he is a citizen of the United States of America; that he has personally known immediately preceding the date of filing his petition, since the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ anno Domini 1899, and in the State in which the above-entitled petition is made continuously since the \_\_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ anno Domini 1903; and that he has personal knowledge that the said petitioner is a person of good moral character, attached to the principles of the Constitution of the United States, and that the petitioner is in every way qualified, in his opinion, to be admitted a citizen of the United States.

Samuel H. Erker  
Samuel Kroll  
 (Signature of Petitioner)  
 (Signature of Witness)

My grandfather's citizenship application



21573

H. D. V. 105 22M  
3741  
CERTIFICATE OF DEATH-HOSPITAL FORM  
REGISTERED NO. 21573  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH  
CITY OF CHICAGO

**CERTIFICATE AND RECORD OF DEATH**

1. FULL NAME *Mrs. Mollie Weiss*  
2. (a) SEX *F* (b) COLOR *W* (c) MARRIED *Married*  
3. (a) BIRTHPLACE *Russia* (b) DATE OF BIRTH *1886*  
4. AGE *29* YEARS MONTHS *1* DAYS *1* HOURS  
5. DIED ON THE *1* DAY OF *November* 1915 AT ABOUT *3 4* P. M.  
6. LAST OCCUPATION (a) *Housewife* (b) FROM THE YEAR *1903* TO THE YEAR *1915*  
7. FORMER OCCUPATION (a) *None* (b) *None*  
8. (a) PLACE OF DEATH *Merry Hospital* (b) HOW LONG IN HOSPITAL *13 d*  
9. (a) USUAL RESIDENCE *1074 Constance Ave* (b) ADDRESS *1532 S. Laramie*  
10. PLACE OF BURIAL *Forest Park* 11. UNDERTAKER *J. W. Martin*  
12. DATE OF BURIAL *Nov 1 - 1915* 13. ADDRESS *1532 S. Laramie*  
14. HOUR *11* M *352*  
15. TELEPHONE *Defector 01*

**PHYSICIAN'S CERTIFICATE OF CAUSE OF DEATH**

I, *Dr. J. W. Martin*, That I attended deceased from *Oct 19* 1915 to *Nov 1* 1915. I last saw her *Nov 1* 1915.  
ALIVE ON THE *1st* DAY OF *November* 1915 THAT *she* DIED ON THE DAY AND AT ABOUT THE TIME SHE WAS  
AND THAT TO THE BEST OF MY KNOWLEDGE AND BELIEF THE CAUSE OF *her* DEATH WAS AS HEREUNDER WRITTEN.  
(IF UNDER ONE YEAR OLD, STATE HOW FED)

16. CAUSE OF DEATH *acute dilatation of heart. Rheumatic*  
*fever*  
17. (a) (b) (c) (d) (e) (f) (g) (h) (i) (j) (k) (l) (m) (n) (o) (p) (q) (r) (s) (t) (u) (v) (w) (x) (y) (z) (aa) (ab) (ac) (ad) (ae) (af) (ag) (ah) (ai) (aj) (ak) (al) (am) (an) (ao) (ap) (aq) (ar) (as) (at) (au) (av) (aw) (ax) (ay) (az) (ba) (bb) (bc) (bd) (be) (bf) (bg) (bh) (bi) (bj) (bk) (bl) (bm) (bn) (bo) (bp) (bq) (br) (bs) (bt) (bu) (bv) (bw) (bx) (by) (bz) (ca) (cb) (cc) (cd) (ce) (cf) (cg) (ch) (ci) (cj) (ck) (cl) (cm) (cn) (co) (cp) (cq) (cr) (cs) (ct) (cu) (cv) (cw) (cx) (cy) (cz) (da) (db) (dc) (dd) (de) (df) (dg) (dh) (di) (dj) (dk) (dl) (dm) (dn) (do) (dp) (dq) (dr) (ds) (dt) (du) (dv) (dw) (dx) (dy) (dz) (ea) (eb) (ec) (ed) (ee) (ef) (eg) (eh) (ei) (ej) (ek) (el) (em) (en) (eo) (ep) (eq) (er) (es) (et) (eu) (ev) (ew) (ex) (ey) (ez) (fa) (fb) (fc) (fd) (fe) (ff) (fg) (fh) (fi) (fj) (fk) (fl) (fm) (fn) (fo) (fp) (fq) (fr) (fs) (ft) (fu) (fv) (fw) (fx) (fy) (fz) (ga) (gb) (gc) (gd) (ge) (gf) (gg) (gh) (gi) (gj) (gk) (gl) (gm) (gn) (go) (gp) (gq) (gr) (gs) (gt) (gu) (gv) (gw) (gx) (gy) (gz) (ha) (hb) (hc) (hd) (he) (hf) (hg) (hh) (hi) (hj) (hk) (hl) (hm) (hn) (ho) (hp) (hq) (hr) (hs) (ht) (hu) (hv) (hw) (hx) (hy) (hz) (ia) (ib) (ic) (id) (ie) (if) (ig) (ih) (ii) (ij) (ik) (il) (im) (in) (io) (ip) (iq) (ir) (is) (it) (iu) (iv) (iw) (ix) (iy) (iz) (ja) (jb) (jc) (jd) (je) (jf) (jg) (jh) (ji) (jj) (jk) (jl) (jm) (jn) (jo) (jp) (jq) (jr) (js) (jt) (ju) (jv) (jw) (jx) (jy) (jz) (ka) (kb) (kc) (kd) (ke) (kf) (kg) (kh) (ki) (kj) (kk) (kl) (km) (kn) (ko) (kp) (kq) (kr) (ks) (kt) (ku) (kv) (kw) (kx) (ky) (kz) (la) (lb) (lc) (ld) (le) (lf) (lg) (lh) (li) (lj) (lk) (ll) (lm) (ln) (lo) (lp) (lq) (lr) (ls) (lt) (lu) (lv) (lw) (lx) (ly) (lz) (ma) (mb) (mc) (md) (me) (mf) (mg) (mh) (mi) (mj) (mk) (ml) (mm) (mn) (mo) (mp) (mq) (mr) (ms) (mt) (mu) (mv) (mw) (mx) (my) (mz) (na) (nb) (nc) (nd) (ne) (nf) (ng) (nh) (ni) (nj) (nk) (nl) (nm) (nn) (no) (np) (nq) (nr) (ns) (nt) (nu) (nv) (nw) (nx) (ny) (nz) (oa) (ob) (oc) (od) (oe) (of) (og) (oh) (oi) (oj) (ok) (ol) (om) (on) (oo) (op) (oq) (or) (os) (ot) (ou) (ov) (ow) (ox) (oy) (oz) (pa) (pb) (pc) (pd) (pe) (pf) (pg) (ph) (pi) (pj) (pk) (pl) (pm) (pn) (po) (pp) (pq) (pr) (ps) (pt) (pu) (pv) (pw) (px) (py) (pz) (qa) (qb) (qc) (qd) (qe) (qf) (qg) (qh) (qi) (qj) (qk) (ql) (qm) (qn) (qo) (qp) (qq) (qr) (qs) (qt) (qu) (qv) (qw) (qx) (qy) (qz) (ra) (rb) (rc) (rd) (re) (rf) (rg) (rh) (ri) (rj) (rk) (rl) (rm) (rn) (ro) (rp) (rq) (rr) (rs) (rt) (ru) (rv) (rw) (rx) (ry) (rz) (sa) (sb) (sc) (sd) (se) (sf) (sg) (sh) (si) (sj) (sk) (sl) (sm) (sn) (so) (sp) (sq) (sr) (ss) (st) (su) (sv) (sw) (sx) (sy) (sz) (ta) (tb) (tc) (td) (te) (tf) (tg) (th) (ti) (tj) (tk) (tl) (tm) (tn) (to) (tp) (tq) (tr) (ts) (tt) (tu) (tv) (tw) (tx) (ty) (tz) (ua) (ub) (uc) (ud) (ue) (uf) (ug) (uh) (ui) (uj) (uk) (ul) (um) (un) (uo) (up) (uq) (ur) (us) (ut) (uu) (uv) (uw) (ux) (uy) (uz) (va) (vb) (vc) (vd) (ve) (vf) (vg) (vh) (vi) (vj) (vk) (vl) (vm) (vn) (vo) (vp) (vq) (vr) (vs) (vt) (vu) (vv) (vw) (vx) (vy) (vz) (wa) (wb) (wc) (wd) (we) (wf) (wg) (wh) (wi) (wj) (wk) (wl) (wm) (wn) (wo) (wp) (wq) (wr) (ws) (wt) (wu) (wv) (ww) (wx) (wy) (wz) (xa) (xb) (xc) (xd) (xe) (xf) (xg) (xh) (xi) (xj) (xk) (xl) (xm) (xn) (xo) (xp) (xq) (xr) (xs) (xt) (xu) (xv) (xw) (xx) (xy) (xz) (ya) (yb) (yc) (yd) (ye) (yf) (yg) (yh) (yi) (yj) (yk) (yl) (ym) (yn) (yo) (yp) (yq) (yr) (ys) (yt) (yu) (yv) (yw) (yx) (yy) (yz) (za) (zb) (zc) (zd) (ze) (zf) (zg) (zh) (zi) (zj) (zk) (zl) (zm) (zn) (zo) (zp) (zq) (zr) (zs) (zt) (zu) (zv) (zw) (zx) (zy) (zz)

Death Certificate of my grandmother Mollie Rebecca Weiss, November 1, 1915

1. PLACE OF DEATH		Registration 3104	
County of <u>Cook</u>		Dist. No. <u>3104</u>	
City, <u>Chicago</u>		Village, <u>Chicago</u>	
*Cancel the three terms not applicable—Do not enter "R. R.," "R. F. D.,"		*Township, <u>Primary</u>	
Street and Number, No. <u>79 Mt. Sinai</u>		City, <u>Chicago</u>	
(If death occurred in a hospital or institution, give its NAME instead of street and number.)		Road Dist., <u>Dist. No.</u>	
Length of residence in city or town where death occurred <u>24</u> yrs. <u>0</u> mos. <u>0</u> ds.		How long in U. S. if of foreign birth? <u>24</u> yrs. <u>0</u> mos. <u>0</u> ds.	
2. FULL NAME <u>Gitel Lapporte</u>			
(a) Residence: No. <u>1501 S. Romulus</u> St., <u>93</u> Ward, <u>Chicago</u>			
(Usual place of abode) (If non-resident, give city or town and State)			
PERSONAL AND STATISTICAL PARTICULARS			
3. SEX <u>Female</u>	4. COLOR OR RACE <u>White</u>	5. Single, Married, Widowed, or Divorced (write the word) <u>Widow</u>	
5a. If married, widowed, or divorced HUSBAND of <u>Ruben</u> (or) WIFE of <u>Unknown</u>			
6. DATE OF BIRTH (month, day, and year) <u>Unknown</u>			
7. AGE <u>77</u> Years	Months	Days	If LESS than 1 day, hrs. or min.
8. Trade, profession, or particular kind of work done, as spinner, sawyer, bookkeeper, etc. <u>Housewife</u>			
9. Industry or business in which work was done, as silk mill, saw mill, bank, etc. <u>Home</u>			
10. Date deceased last worked at this occupation (month, day, and year) <u>Dec 1933</u>			
11. Total time (years) spent in this occupation <u>40 yrs</u>			
12. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) <u>Quikst</u> (State or country) <u>Russia</u>			
13. NAME <u>Chaim Elihu Laporte</u>			
14. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) <u>Quikst</u> (State or country) <u>Russia</u>			
15. MAIDEN NAME <u>Unknown</u>			
16. BIRTHPLACE (city or town) <u>Quikst</u> (State or country) <u>Russia</u>			
17. INFOMANT <u>Hospital Records</u> (personal signature with pen and ink) <u>Holdsmith</u>			
P. O. Address <u>Holdsmith</u>			
18. PLACE OF BURIAL, Cremation or Removal Cemetery <u>Graves</u> Location <u>Graves</u> (Township, Road Dist., Village or City) <u>Graves</u> County <u>Cook</u> State <u>Ill</u>			
19. DATE <u>11/1</u> , 1933			
20. UNDERTAKER <u>Sam D. Kier</u> (personal signature with pen and ink) <u>Pier Undertakers</u> ADDRESS <u>3125 Lawrence St. Chicago</u>			
21. DATE OF DEATH (month, day, and year) <u>Oct 31</u> , 1933			
22. I HEREBY CERTIFY, That I attended deceased from <u>Oct 30</u> , 1933 to <u>Oct 31</u> , 1933			
I last saw him alive on <u>Oct 31</u> , 1933, death is said to have occurred on the date stated above, at <u>7:30</u> p.m.			
*The principal cause of death and related causes of importance were as follows: <u>Chronic degenerative atherosclerosis &amp; gross cardiac failure</u> Date of onset <u>4 wks.</u>			
<u>Paralytic ileus</u> <u>5 days</u>			
Other contributory causes of importance:			
23. Was an operation performed? <u>No</u> Date of <u>    </u>			
For what disease or injury? <u>No</u>			
Was there an autopsy? <u>No</u>			
What test confirmed diagnosis? <u>Autopsy</u>			
24. If a communicable disease; where contracted? <u>    </u>			
Was disease in any way related to occupation of deceased? <u>No</u>			
If so, specify how: <u>No</u>			
(Signed) <u>J. H. Trace</u> M. D.			
Address <u>3125 Lawrence St. Chicago</u>			
Date <u>Oct 31</u> , 1933. Telephone <u>Har 5095</u>			
*N. B.—State the disease causing death. All cases of death from "violence, casualty, or any undue means" must be referred to the coroner. See Section 10 Coroner's Act.			
25. Filed <u>Reman to Burial</u> 1933 NOV 1 PM 12 50 Registrar <u>    </u>			
O. Address <u>    </u>			

Death Certificate of my great-grandmother Gitel Lapporte, November 1, 1933

STATE OF FLORIDA			
OFFICE of VITAL STATISTICS			
CERTIFIED COPY			
STATE BOARD OF HEALTH BUREAU OF VITAL STATISTICS		STATE FILE NO. <b>3795</b>	
1. PLACE OF DEATH a. CITY OR TOWN <b>Udala</b> b. COUNTY <b>Miami Beach</b>		1. USUAL RESIDENCE a. CITY OR TOWN <b>Udala</b> b. COUNTY <b>Udala</b>	
2. FULL NAME OF DECEASED a. (Print) <b>Tillie</b> b. (Last) <b>HELMAN</b>		3. DATE OF DEATH a. (Month) <b>Aug.</b> b. (Day) <b>11</b> c. (Year) <b>1954</b>	
4. SEX <b>Female</b> 5. COLOR OR RACE <b>White</b> 6. MARRIAGE STATUS <b>Married</b>		7. DATE OF BIRTH <b>April 25, 1888</b> 8. AGE (in years at date of death) <b>66</b>	
9. USUAL OCCUPATION (name and kind of work) <b>Housewife</b>		10. PLACE OF BIRTH <b>Romania</b>	
11. MARRIAGE a. (Print) <b>Nathan Helman</b> b. (Last) <b>Helman</b>		12. MARRIAGE a. (Print) <b>Udala</b> b. (Last) <b>Udala</b>	
13. WAS DECEASED EVER IN U.S. ARMED FORCES? <b>No</b>		14. SOCIAL SECURITY NO. <b>None</b>	
15. CAUSE OF DEATH a. (Print) <b>Heart failure</b> b. (Last) <b>Helman</b>		16. MEDICAL CERTIFICATION a. (Print) <b>Heart failure of the degenerated colon</b> b. (Last) <b>Helman</b>	
17. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>		18. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>	
19. SIGNATURE OF REGISTRAR <b>Maurice Darden</b>		20. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
21. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		22. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
23. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		24. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
25. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		26. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
27. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		28. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
29. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		30. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
31. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		32. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
33. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		34. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
35. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		36. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
37. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		38. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
39. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		40. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
41. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		42. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
43. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		44. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
45. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		46. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
47. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		48. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
49. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		50. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
51. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		52. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
53. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		54. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
55. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		56. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
57. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		58. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
59. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		60. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
61. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		62. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
63. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		64. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
65. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		66. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
67. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		68. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
69. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		70. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
71. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		72. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
73. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		74. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
75. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		76. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
77. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		78. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
79. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		80. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
81. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		82. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
83. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		84. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
85. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		86. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
87. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		88. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
89. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		90. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
91. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		92. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
93. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		94. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
95. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		96. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
97. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		98. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	
99. SIGNATURE OF WITNESS <b>John T. Helman</b>		100. SIGNATURE OF DECEASED <b>Tillie Helman</b>	

Death Certificate of my grandmother Tillie Helman, August 12, 1954



## History of the Lapporte Family by David Baron

A brief outline of the Lapert (later anglicized to Lapporte) family tree dating back to 1802, when my great-grandfather David was born. His son, (my grandfather) Tzemach, was born in 1832. He was 7 years old and was playing "horsie" when his father passed away. It seems that there had been a wedding in the family at that time. Weddings in those days were usually celebrated for about a week or more as families gathered infrequently due to the slowness of travel and poor roads. It seems that the young men would celebrate by drinking and then participating in high jinks of one kind or another. As this wedding occurred during the Fall or Winter months, the young men danced barefoot in the snow, resulting in David becoming chilled and dying a few days later. He was 37 years old at the time (1839).

Tzemach had several brothers and sisters and they were all raised by his mother Bubbie Malka. When he was a young man, Tzemach became very ill and a young woman was hired to nurse him. He recovered from his illness eventually and he and his nurse Sadie became romantically involved. She was a divorcee with a small son. Her former husband's name was Sussman and the boy's name was Chaim Sussman. Susman Senior, father of Chaim, was a Rabbi in Kadan-Kovno Gubernya. Chaim was raised by Bubbe Malkah, Tzemach's mother.

It is strange to state that a divorce was granted in those days. There had to be exceptionally strong reasons for bringing it about, as in Jewish life in those days, few divorces were allowed. However, after Tsemach's recovery, he and Sadie were married and three sons and two daughters resulted from that marriage. The sons were David, Reuven, and Isaac, and the daughters were Pesa Raisa (Alta) and Anna. David and Reuven grew up, married and lived out their years normally as did Anna. Isaac was sickly and died at about age 25. Pesa Raisa was also sickly, born a "blue baby," married, bore three children and suffered from her defective heart condition until she passed away at 56 years of age in 1929.

This brings us to the present generation. Tzemach owned a small bakery. The log cabin in which they lived served as his business and residence. The inside of the cabin had a board near the entrance which served as the business counter, table, etc. In one corner, an open barrel of salt herring stood. Behind the counter stood a long deep brick oven where the bread was baked. There were also some barrels of flour and supplies about. Further back hung a curtain shielding a crude bed for the parents. There were several wooden benches on which the children slept. In the cold winter nights, the family slept on top of the warm oven which provided the only heat. The cabin was on "Mitzraim Gasse" (Egyptian street). The family was raised here. They had a small hut in back where a cow was kept and a coop for a few chickens.

Tzemach was also a bookkeeper and worked for some years for a tobacco firm in Kovno and earned about 30 rubles a month. This was the *nadan* (dowry) money he saved up for his daughters. Tzemach was a man of outstanding character-highest ethical and moral standards, an "*erhlecher yid*". He composed music and was the finest *Baal Tefilah* in town. Good voice plus natural abilities and sincerity. When he passed away at the age of 78 in 1910, the townspeople remarked there was never before such a Tzemach nor would there ever be another like him. His wife passed away at age 63 on a Friday evening and was buried Saturday night. Died of a throat hemorrhage.

As the sons were the oldest of the children, their development naturally came before that of the daughters. David and Reuven attended "*cheder*" and then advanced to the local yeshiva. David in particular was an exceptionally bright boy and at age 16 had completed his yeshiva studies and

was offered *Smicas* if he would become a Rabbi. He was however beginning to associate with other young men and began to express a desire to enter a secular program of study. His father became alarmed at this time and decided it would be wiser if he assumed some adult responsibilities. He began to look for a wife for his son who was 19 years of age. He finally located a 16-year-old daughter of a respected family in Birz, a nearby town. After some dickering about dowry, brought the young couple together and announced an engagement. They were married a short time later and David moved in with his wife's family where he was given board and lodging for two years as part of the dowry. The several hundred rubles pledged were never actually paid. As the terms agreed upon were never carried out, Tzemach felt that he had been taken and was chagrined about it. David and his wife Chaya ran a store and David spend his days in the yeshiva. Later when his family began to grow, he undertook to do other work including managing a lumber business. When they emigrated to the United States in the early years of the 20th century, he became the "*magid*," the leader of the Chevra Gamorrah of the Russia Schul in Chicago until 1925 when he passed away of a stroke.

The second son Reuven also attended the Vilkomir Yeshivah. He was a good student and was eligible for *Smichas* (diploma) but did not accept the offer. When it became necessary for him to marry and have a means of livelihood, he chose to become a Scribe, a "*Soifer*," who wrote *Sefer Torahs* and all other holy works. He was not a very strong man physically and barely eked out a living for his large family. Reuben was tall and lean. His wife Gitel was a direct descendent of the Vilna Gaon. He too was a learned scholar. He was a scribe and earned a meager livelihood by writing Holy works, *Sefer Torahs*, etc. He had a large family which was he was barely able to support. One of his daughters (Malke) was a sickly child (defective heart) and was sent to "*Zaides*" in Vilkomir each summer where fresh milk and fresh air helped her. After David and Reuben married and left Vilkomir, they did not see each other for 24 years.

Isaac was sickly all his life, never married and passed away at 25.

Then we come to Pesha Raisa, my mother, the eldest daughter. She had been born with a heart defect and was unable to do physical work of any kind. But she was much like her father, saw things the way he did, was intellectually inclined, and was a kindly person. She took care of her father in his old age.

Sometime about 1905 a catastrophic fire broke out in Vilkomir which razed the town. Tzemach's log house bakery as well as most other buildings were completely consumed in the holocaust. The government loaned householders money with which to rebuild and Tzemach was allowed about 300 rubles. Tzemach took the money and rebuilt his cabin and business. But many of the people did not rebuild. Some moved to other towns, *Mitzraim Gass* was not the same and Tzemach's house was the only one rebuilt. It was hard for Tzemach's family to earn a living. So the family began to spread out too. The migration to America started. This ended the European period.

The youngest daughter Anna was sent to America to keep house for Chaim Sussman, her half-brother, who had lost his wife shortly before. That left Tsemach only with Pesha Raisa, her husband Joseph Baron, and her two children living with Tsemach. However it soon became necessary for Joseph Baron, Pesa Raisa's husband, to start assuming their responsibilities of supporting his family. He decided to become a *Shohet* (ritual slaughterer). Tsemach arranged with the best local *Shochet* to teach Joseph to become a *Shochet*. He was a yeshiva *bocher*, well-versed in rabbinical lore and was well learned in tradition and he picked up the necessary knowledge and experience quickly. At the end of a year he was given his *Caballah* as a certified *Shochet*. Shortly

thereafter, in 1907, he left for America where he began to work and save his dollars to bring his wife and children to America.

Hannah, the younger daughter, was a normal healthy able-bodied girl who did most of the physical work at home. She loved herring and had some for breakfast every morning with dark bread. Every Pesach a new barrel was opened so she could have some and it would be *Pesachdik*

Meanwhile in 1910, Tzemach passed away at the age of 78. This left Pesha Raisa free to come to America and join her husband. This she did in the fall of 1912, with their two children, David (myself) and my sister Hannah.

I would like to point out that the traditions of the "Lapert" family were the customary way of living for devout Orthodox Jewish families of their era. They were more Torah oriented, synagogue goers and ardent observers of mitzvahs and high morality. Their education was completely Talmudic and they sought to instill these precepts in their children. At that time, there were few if any opportunities for other sources of learning available to Jewish youth. Perforce they had to follow in the footsteps of their predecessors farther intellectual and social development. It was only in the later years of the nineteenth century that it became possible to reach out to other sources for their growth and accomplishment. A gradual awakening in Europe and then emigration to America brought an end to the Talmudic Age. Traditionally the Lapert family was more liberal in orientation. They were *Misnagdim* as differentiation from the *Chassidim*, who were much more fanatical.

Because of the "Priviz" (conscription), Russia passed a law in the 1880's requiring all families to adopt a surname. Tzemach had come from a small village called "Lopert," which was near Vilkomir and probably was known as the "Laperter" and decided to take Lapert as his family name. Sadie Linfield stated this fact as given to her by her father David Laporte.

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Transcribed by Rachel Baron Zukerman in 2002 from notes written by her grandfather David Baron at several different times in his life. I combined several versions of this into one narrative.



told that his grandfather Shmuel Levin of Vilna was descended from the Gaon.

- Yaakov Asher, son of Tsvi Levison of Opole, Poland. (Tidhar:1397).
- See also Miller

#### **Levine**

See Rabinowitz

#### **Lieberman**

• Naomi Pomerantz of Kfar Monash, Israel; was told by her grandmother, Eva Rosenberg, that her family was descended from the Gaon of Vilna. It is not known which side of the family was descended from the Gaon. The families concerned were Lieberman or Globberman of Pinsk, Byelorussia.

• Menucha Lieberman of Kelvin, South Africa, descended from the families Lieberman, Rubenstein or Rostowski of Telz, Lithuania, was informed by her relatives Yudelman from Telz that the family was related to the Gaon of Vilna.

#### **Lopaiko**

David Natan Lapport (born about 1885), a *khazan* of Chicago, claimed descent from the Gaon of Vilna through his mother, Gittel, daughter of Eliyahu Lopaiko of Anikst, Lithuania. Independent confirmation of this family tradition comes from the Svirsky family of Jerusalem, Israel, descended from Benyamin Lopaiko of Salok, Lithuania (born about 1840). (Sources: Charles Bernstein, Chicago, Illinois, USA; Shmuel Gorr genealogical archive)

#### **Maggid**

Moshe Dov Maggid (born 1901, Krozhe, Lithuania, son of Rabbi Zalmen Maggid) was believed to be descended from the Gaon of Vilna through his mother, Leah, the daughter of Tsvi Danilovitz. (Source: Tidhar:2806)

#### **Makhnes**

The Makhnes family was one of the founding families of Petah Tikvah, Israel. According to Tidhar, the family was descended from the Gaon of Vilna. According to Benyamin Rivlin, the Makhnes family was not descended from the Gaon, but from some family from which the Gaon was also descended, although not through the Gaon's ancestors Rabbi Moshe Rivkas or Rabbi Moshe Kremer. (Source: Tidhar: 962)

#### **Menkin**

The descent from the Gaon of the Menkin family of Zager, Lithuania, has been established; other families bear the name Menkin who may be related to the Zager family, but their relationship has not been established. In particular, these families include the descendants of Abba Menkin who lived in Kupiskis, Lithuania, at the end of the nineteenth century. (Source: Louise Glassman, Indianapolis, Indiana, USA)

It should be noted that the late Rabbi Moshe Tsvi Neriah, founder of the Bnei Akivah youth movement in Israel, was the son of Petakhiah Menkin, who was not related to the Zager Menkins or descended from the Gaon of Vilna. (Source: Rabbi

Note: Gittel Lopaiko was my mother's grandmother. MK

*Eliyahu's Branches: The Descendants of the Vilna Gaon and His Family* by Chaim Freedman (Avotaynu 1997)

## Descriptions of my grandparents' villages

**ANYKSCIAI** Utena dist., Lithuania. A.'s J. community began in the 17th cent. It was hit hard by repeated fires in the late 19th and early 20th cents. The J. pop. in 1897 was 2,754 (70% of the total). On 14

**SETA** (Yid. Shat) Kedainiai dist., Lithuania. Jews first settled in the 17th cent. A Karaite community existed from 1664 to 1709. In the second half of the 19th cent., the J. community suffered from fires and famine. In 1897 the J. pop. was 1,135 (68% of the total). Until 1898 children studied in a *heder*, after which a J. school was established. Zionist and Bundist organizations were active. Many emigrated to South Africa and the U.S. in the mid-1930s as a consequence of the deteriorating economy and anti-J. boycott. The

**FOCSANI** Moldavia dist., Rumania. Jews first settled in the late 17th cent. and were mostly craftsmen. In 1900, several hundred Jews left F. due to a drought. Of the 600 merchants in 1906, 245 were Jews. J. industrialists established several factories in F. In 1874, a J. school sponsored by B'nai B'rith was opened with 200 pupils. F. was a center of antisemitic activity: in 1838 it was the first town to introduce the "J. oath"; in 1859, a blood libel occurred here; and in 1900, the antisemitic journal *Santinela* began to appear. One of the first branches of the Eretz Israel Settlement Movement was founded on 18 Nov. 1881, as the forerunner of the Zionist movement. On 17 March 1925, rioters destroyed over 300 J. houses, the synagogue, and the J. school. The J. pop. in 1899 was 5,954, dropping

Source: *The Encyclopedia of Jewish Life Before and During the Holocaust*,  
Yad Vashem, Jerusalem, New York University Press, Washington Square, New York

## PART II - MY PARENTS

### My Mother

My mother, Ester Sarah Weiss (Sarah Ester in Hebrew) was born on January 15, 1907, in South Chicago, Ill. She was the first of two children born to Mollie and Abe Weiss.



**Ester Weiss**  
(poss. high school graduation photo)

Unfortunately, I know very little about her childhood, except that she started life in South Chicago and moved to her grandparents' home on the West Side of Chicago after her mother died in 1915. From the age of eight on, and possibly even before, she always looked out for her younger brother Nathan.

The first picture I have of her was taken when she was in her late teens or early twenties. She had a small frame, was of average height (5 feet, 5 inches), and had red wavy hair. Her face lit up when she smiled. Shy and sensitive, she had a wonderful laugh and was fun to be with once she got over her initial shyness.

She attended Harrison High School, where she caught the eye of classmate Arthur Goldberg. At the time, she didn't think much of him at all (Aunt Nettie said Mom called him a "jerk"! ). I would have loved to hear her comments when President Kennedy appointed him to the U.S. Supreme Court in 1962.



**Ester Weiss and Nate Helman in**  
**Michigan City, Indiana**

On graduating from high school, she went to work as the office manager and bookkeeper for a realty company—a useful contact when her father and later her brother needed an apartment. She also took night school commercial courses. For several years she and some friends used to rent a cottage in Michigan City, Ind., for summer weekends and vacations. That's where she met Dad, whose friends also shared a summer cottage.

## Mom Marries Dad

Once, after seeing a man in a movie get down on his knee to ask for the woman's hand in marriage, I asked Mom if that's how Dad proposed to her.

Form 44  
1331615

State of Illinois  
Cook County

# Marriage License

To any Person Legally Authorized to Solemnize Marriage.

CREATING:

Marriage may be Celebrated, in the County of Cook and State of Illinois,  
between Mr. Nathan Helman of Chicago, in the County of Cook and  
State of Illinois, of the age of 24 years, and Miss Ester Weiss  
of Chicago, in the County of Cook and State of Illinois, of the age of 24 years.

Witness, Robert M. Switzer, County Clerk of the County of Cook, and the Seal thereof,  
at my office in Chicago, this 13 day of December, A. D. 1931.

The Person who Solemnizes Marriage is cautioned against making any changes in this License.

STATE OF ILLINOIS, } ss. Salomon Goldwasser a Rabbi  
COUNTY OF COOK. } (NAME OF PERSON OFFICIATING) (OFFICIAL TITLE)

hereby certify that Mr. Nathan Helman and M. Ester Weiss  
were united in Marriage by me at Chicago in the County of Cook and State of Illinois,  
on the 20 day of December, 1931.

(The Names in this certificate must be identical with Names in above License)

Salomon Goldwasser  
(SIGNATURE AND OFFICIAL TITLE)

Address 633 Cleveland Ave

N.B.— This License, with certificate of marriage properly made, must (within 30 days) be returned to the COUNTY CLERK, by the person who performed the marriage ceremony.

Marriage License of my parents Nathan Helman and Ester Weiss, December 20, 1931

She told me that, after “keeping company” for a year or two, she asked Dad about his intentions toward her...prompting the hoped-for discussion of marriage. They had a modest wedding in the rabbi's study at Anshe Emet. The white alabaster lamp in our living room was a wedding present from Mom's boss, Mr. Schreiber.

After marrying my Dad, Mom became a full-time housekeeper. As soon as she was set up she invited her *Bubbe* (grandmother) to come for a visit. Since the kitchen was not kosher (a fact that surprises me, knowing that both she and Dad grew up in kosher homes), she was worried that her *Bubbe* would not eat the food she prepared. But *Bubbe* assured her, “*Fur meine kind....*” For my child, I'll eat, was her reply. Mom made *gefilte* fish for her *Bubbe*.

She was a very loving and devoted wife and mother. At home she called my Dad “honey” and occasionally “*Nucham*,” his Yiddish name. She cooked and baked something different every

day—including lunches for Bob and me (we lived so close to elementary school we came home for lunch every day).



**My parents--possible wedding photo**

She told me that when Dad bought their first car, there was no such thing as a driver's license. Their friend Al Bloom drove the car home from the dealer and parked it in front of their apartment building. When Dad had to move the car—overnight parking wasn't allowed on that street—Mom insisted on going with him so they'd be together in case of an accident.

She ran the household to please Dad and, no matter how she felt, she always primped a little before he came home. She felt Dad was entitled to quiet when he got home, first crack at the newspaper, a home-cooked dinner promptly served, the most comfortable chair, and our respect at all times. Mom had no tolerance for backtalk or strong language—even “shut up” was taboo in our house. She was by nature a very neat person. In fact, she didn't own a robe because she got dressed and made the bed soon after she got up.

Early in their marriage Mom needed to have her tonsils removed. She told me that she was awake during the surgery at Mt. Sinai Hospital and she had to hold the tray for the tonsils! Determined not to embarrass my Dad, she was afraid to show how much pain she was in.

### **Influences of the Earlier Years**

Having lived modestly all her life, Mom was awed by wealthy people. Although I never heard my mother complain about the way we lived, she made it clear she hoped Bob and I would enjoy a higher standard of living. She always asked me what my dates' fathers did, noting that it was just as easy to love a rich man as a poor man. Family background was very important too, and for this reason she thought Seymour Lapporte would be a great match for me (since he was eight years older and a cousin, I'm sure he'd be shocked then and now to know about her “plan”).

Mom was very happy when Richard Krause, the grandson of the owners of Goldblatt's Department Store, started taking me out. She was thrilled when he took me to a family dinner at the Standard Club (members were the elite German Jews). We dated on and off for several years and she kept urging me to continue seeing him. When I'd insist I felt no attraction to him, she'd ask me to give him another chance. To my surprise, she was not at all happy about the poor but ambitious admirer who drove a cab during the day to put himself through evening law school.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>1. I stopped dating Sam Garber after I met Larry. Sam eventually became a lawyer and, in about 1990, introduced himself to my brother as my former boyfriend and asked what had become of me.



**Ester with Martha Bloom, her lifelong friend, in 1938**

The religious home of her *Bubbe* and *Zayde* had a lasting effect on my mother. She always showed special deference to older people. She wouldn't cook, sew, do housework, or even crochet on Saturday (a practice I've tried to follow). And when she wrote or did something that wouldn't have met the standards of her childhood, she'd comment that her grandparents wouldn't approve. She enjoyed the Jewish holidays and tried to make them meaningful for me too. She encouraged me to stay home from school on the festivals—but only if I went to services. Since our synagogue in Austin didn't have much of a *succah*, some years we'd take the bus to Rodfei Zedek or KAM in Hyde Park—she felt it was okay to spend money and travel since our intent was to enjoy the holiday.

Raised in a Yiddish-speaking household, she enjoyed speaking Yiddish. Now I regret that I didn't let her teach me the language. Her conversations were often sprinkled with Yiddish expressions like “*Gay gezundterheit*” (go in good health, sometimes used as a dismissal), “*zolster essen kreplach*” (so eat kreplach, a refusal to get upset), “*nisht gefairlach*” (so what, not a big deal). She often used colorful expressions like...

If the shoe fits, wear it... If you sleep with dogs, you get fleas... You can't dance at all the weddings. Later I learned that many of these expressions were translations of Yiddish sayings and proverbs.

Mom had a ready store of warm memories that she enjoyed sharing with me. I could never hear enough about life in her *Bubbe* and *Zayde's* home. Among my favorite stories were the ones about Uncle Nate getting into trouble!

Once, while playing hide and seek, his friends locked him in a cellar and forgot about him—the family was frantic and called the police to help find him. Another time he was caught playing with razor blades and put his hands behind his back to hide them from his grandfather, cutting his hands badly. Most of these episodes ended with Nathan getting a strapping; after the punishment, he had to kiss the strap.

### **Memories of My Mother**

Always especially devoted to her family, Mom made a home for Uncle Nate before he was married, for her father, for my father's parents for a short time, and later for Aunt Nettie. Family was everything to her.

She went out of her way to be kind to others and taught me to do the same. Courtesies like giving a seat on the bus to someone older were ingrained in me. When Bob and I were in grade school, she used to encourage us to bring our friends home to play.

My mother had several good friends, but lacked confidence outside her immediate circle. She enjoyed family gatherings, cooking and baking, talking with friends, reading, and playing mah jong<sup>2</sup>. Super-sensitive to other's needs, she'd feel hurt when others weren't sensitive to hers.



**My mom Ester Helman and me, 1945**

She was an active member of Sisterhood, B'nai Brith Women, Hadassah, and Brandeis Women. In fact she served as financial secretary and "sunshine card" chairman of one or more of them for many years. But she went to events at Mount Sinai and other outside-her-usual circle with some trepidation about her appearance and ability to socialize with strangers.

One of her first purchases for the apartment on Washington Boulevard was a grand piano. She played the piano when she was finished with her housework—she loved music. The theme from Schubert's Unfinished Symphony and Elegy by Massenet were her favorite pieces. Several times a year she took me to concerts at Orchestra Hall. We'd go downtown by bus and sit in the second balcony. These are the least expensive seats, but she'd claim that the real music lovers preferred the acoustics up there. Many of the concerts she took me to featured famous piano soloists of the era like Leon Fleisher, William Kappel, Myra Hess, and Rudolph Serkin. She also took me to the ballet once a year.

At her urging, I took piano lessons for many years. I never practiced enough—there were always more interesting things to do after school. And, in the evenings, I was not allowed to practice since this would "disturb your father."

Like most women in those years, my mother wore a cotton housedress at home and rarely left the house without a hat and often gloves, winter and summer. Once when Bob went to a new friend's house for the first time, my mother asked about his home and family. One of the questions she asked was what the boy's mother wore around the house. Bob reported that she wore slacks. In other words, she was more modern. And to top it all off, Bob added that the mother looked quite young. That hurt!

Although I thought she was a wonderful cook and baker, she had an inferiority complex about her culinary skills. I am still amazed when I remember how she could peel an apple or potato with a paring knife, taking off a single spiral of the thinnest peel. She taught me all sorts of baking shortcuts and tips...but felt inadequate because she had occasional problems with Passover sponge cakes and was afraid to bake with yeast dough.

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<sup>2</sup>2. Shortly after my mother died, my Aunt Rose asked if she could have my mother's mah jong set. When I visited her in February 1999, I asked if she still played mah jong. She said her regular game ended with the death of one of the regulars a few years earlier. Gail pointed out that since sets now have plastic tiles, the old set had value as a collector's item.

### My Mother's Gefilte Fish - A Digression



My mother Ester Helman at age 45

My mother made delicious *gefilte* fish. As a child I remember going to the fish store her. The fish man would select the fish for her approval before cleaning them. He used a special tool to remove the scales. The package we took home included the head, bones, entrails, and skins, along with the fillets.

When we got home she would put the head, etc., to boil into a broth, attach the grinder to a kitchen chair, and grind up the fish and vegetables she put in. The whole apartment had an aroma from the fish cooking. For lunch the day of the first Seder, we'd get our first taste of the *gefilte* fish. I ate mine without horseradish and still do.

When I was engaged and wanted to make *gefilte* fish for the holiday, I called my mother's friend Martha for advice. She gave me directions and the last step was, "season to taste." I bought the fish and used my mother's grinder. I did everything Martha told me until I got to the last step, "season to taste." Every time I brought a teaspoon of raw fish to my mouth, my stomach rose in rebellion. I couldn't do it. So I added a little salt and cooked the fish, hoping for the best.

The fish was virtually tasteless, and I vowed "never again." Many years later, when we lived in Schenectady, I ate delicious *gefilte* fish at my friend Yaffa Lown's house. When I described my early attempt at making it, she produced a recipe with everything spelled out in detail, including the exact quantity of salt and pepper.

I made *gefilte* fish again for the next holiday and it tasted just the way I remembered my mother's fish. From that time on, when it's holiday time I make *gefilte* fish. When Steve was at the University of Maryland he ate at the Hillel House. Someone passed him a platter of jarred *gefilte* fish. He didn't take any and when asked how he could turn down that special treat, he explained, "I only like homemade *gefilte* fish." He was amazed that none of his friends ever tasted homemade *gefilte* fish.

### Back to Mom's Story

By the time I was in high school, I had reached my full height (5'4"), about the same as hers. Although we were different sizes (she was always trying to stay in a size 16 and at that time I was size 7 or 9) Mom got a kick out of our occasional borrowing each other's coats and jackets.





**My parents at age 47 in 1954.**

inset on the back, and “Grandmother” engraved inside. She thought it looked old-fashioned. I put a picture of my grandmother Mollie in the locket, and I enjoy wearing this connection between my great-grandmother Gittel (who gave it to Mom), my grandmother Mollie (whose picture I put inside), my mother, and me.

### **An Untimely Death**

My mother had suffered with fibroid tumors for several years. I never realized that her need to rest during heavy menstrual periods indicated anything significant. As I grew older I heard her tell Dad on several occasions that she went to the doctor and was advised to have surgery. “You go to a surgeon, he wants to cut,” she’d say as she put it off from year to year.

In 1956 when Mom told me she was going to have the hysterectomy she’d put off for several years, she made light of it, hiding her fear so we wouldn’t worry. She said the procedure was so common, her friends referred to it as “the blue plate special.” She scheduled her surgery for the interim days of Passover so she wouldn’t miss the *seders* or cause the family to miss them. Mom made the first *seder* as usual and shooed us off to Aunt Rose and Uncle Nate’s for the second *seder*—saying she felt a cold coming on.

In her last conversation with Uncle Nate she said “Pray for me.” During surgery she went into shock (she was literally scared to death according to one theory) and never came out of it. I was unaware of it at the time, but Rose Weiss, who worked as a nurse at Mt. Sinai, later told me she was alarmed at my mother’s appearance after surgery and Uncle Nate tried to get several

She’d always be the first to notice something wrong with her loved ones. When my cousin Gail Weiss showed signs of early eye problems (“lazy eye”), it was Aunt Ester who spotted the problem first. When she saw how JoAnn Weiss was creating tension between her parents, she offered to have JoAnn stay with us for a while (and Jo was afraid of my mother ever after)! When I was away at school and trying to conceal the fact that I was gaining weight, she noticed almost immediately that I was indeed more rounded.

She enjoyed crocheting, especially when sitting outdoors during the summer. She had embarked on a multi-year project of making hundreds of lace medallions which she intended to put together into a tablecloth for my trousseau. After she died, Aunt Rose put them together into eight placemats (which I have never used).

One of my most treasured pieces of jewelry is a gold locket and chain given to my mother by her grandmother. The locket has my mother’s initials—EW—engraved on the front, her birthstone—a garnet—

doctors to intervene when mother's surgeon refused to respond. In fact, Uncle Nate was on his way to the home of a cardiologist, to bring him to the hospital when my mother died before dawn on March 30, 1956. Dad agreed to an autopsy but the results didn't shed any more light on what went wrong.



**Me with my parents in 1955.**

and deserved. My Dad and I couldn't speak of her without crying—leading us to avoid the subject (not a good way to handle grief). So along with the sorrow and loss, I felt guilt at all the things I hadn't said or done.

Because I was a girl, I wasn't expected to say *Kaddish*. I see now, after my father died, that this was a mistake. After my Dad died, I learned that saying *Kaddish* at the daily *minyan* is an important part of the grieving process. When I went to say *Kaddish* for Dad, I told myself that it was for Mom too, and that helped me put some unfinished grieving behind me. Yes, even though she died 41 years earlier, I was still grieving. When I take pleasure from my children or grandchildren, I am often reminded how much she would have enjoyed them and how many wonderful experiences she missed. She always used to promise to spoil my grandchildren and send them home when they got cranky.

I didn't realize how special my mother was until she died. Barely a day goes by that I don't think about what she would have said or thought (written nearly 40 years later). Saul, his oldest daughter Ayelet Hadas (Hadassah=Esther) and my niece Sarah Helman are named for her.

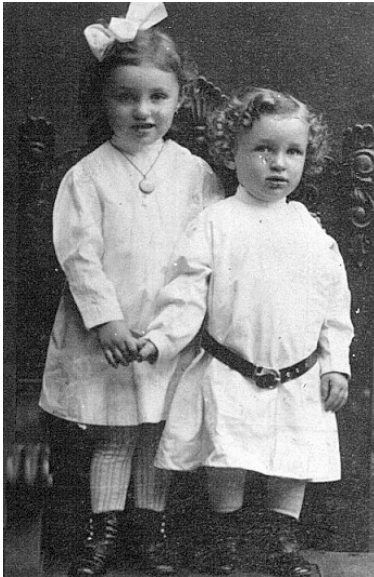
Incidentally, since both my mother and her mother died quite young, I never thought about becoming an "old lady" myself. I assumed the pattern of my predecessors would continue...but here I am!

After she died at age 50, people spoke mostly of how warm and caring she was. For that reason, memorial gifts were used to endow a scholarship at Mt. Sinai's School of Nursing for the student nurse who exemplified this extra concern for others.

Mom's sudden death was hard on all of us. Dad was devastated. The fact that the tragedy happened at "his" hospital and he returned to the scene every day didn't help.

For me, it marked the abrupt end of life as I'd known it. Suddenly I was on my own, without a mother. Teenage girls are notorious for not getting along with their mothers and I was no exception. Just when I was starting to develop an adult relationship with my mother, she was gone. I felt I hadn't given her the friendship and admiration she wanted

## My Father



**Nate (right) with big sister Anne**

My father, Nathan Woltzer Helman, was born in Chicago on November 15, 1907, and named for his maternal grandfather, Nachum Wolitzer. He was the second of three closely spaced children born to Tillie and Jacob Helman. He was about 5 feet 9 inches tall, handsome, very bright, and, although reserved, a natural leader. By the time I came along, his head of wavy brown hair was just a memory, and my mother occasionally said it was a shame I hadn't known my Dad with hair because he was so good-looking!

He told me that as a child he was a "bookworm" who took delight in working his way through the local library, often taking out and returning a book a day. When his parents turned out his bedroom light, he'd read by the streetlights. Born a "lefty," he was forced to learn to write with his right hand at school, a common practice at that time.

He skipped half a grade in grammar school and another half in high school, which put him in the same graduating class as his sister Anne, who was 14 months older. The two of them walked together to school throughout their elementary and high school years. As the only boy in the family, he often escorted his sisters Anne and Dorothy to social events.

### **First jobs**

He attended Carl Schurz High School, where there were morning and afternoon shifts to accommodate the large student population. With only half a day of school, he went to work and never participated in team sports.

In addition to helping his mother with the store, he got a job as a delivery boy for a downtown store. He earned one dollar for the half-day plus a nickel for carfare for every delivery. After a time, he asked to have his deliveries limited to the north side, so he could make more deliveries each day. The office manager refused, so he quit this job. He took great pride in showing how well he knew the city...all based on his attempts to make extra money by carefully planning his delivery routes. His next job was at a drug store where he filled (!) and delivered prescriptions.

Among the many books he read as a youth was a biography of Samuel Insul, a poor young man who started out as secretary and bookkeeper to Thomas Edison and ultimately created a major electric utility empire in the Midwest. This inspired him to take two years of typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping in high school. He was an excellent typist too.

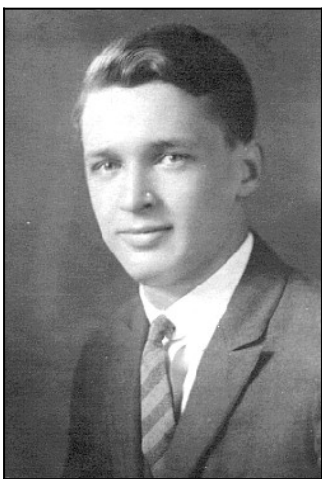


**My Dad with his two sisters, Anne and Dorothy, and parents.**

After graduating high school at age 17, Dad became the bookkeeper of Harry Bergman's Health Club, where he said he was able to greet each of the thousand members by name (including Al Capone!). It was there he learned to play handball—a sport he enjoyed for some years.

In addition to working full-time at Bergman's, he took accounting courses at night at the downtown campus of Northwestern University. He joined a Jewish fraternity at Northwestern and played on the frat baseball team—the first time he was on an athletic team as well as his first experience playing baseball. After two years, he felt he had learned all he could at the health club—including how to beat Harry Bergman at handball—so he quit and found a job as bookkeeper for a tobacco jobber.

In three years at Northwestern, he earned 48 credits, not enough for an associate degree but enough for a diploma in accounting. At the time of his graduation, he was President of the Commerce Club and winner of the Psi Gamma Rho prize, awarded by the faculty to the student ranked highest in scholarship and leadership. He never struck me as the gregarious type who could be a greeter or fraternity president...but as a young man he obviously was. I can still picture his framed certificate hanging in our house (he used to joke that it got closer to the bathroom each time the walls were painted).



At Northwestern, one of the most feared teachers was a Professor Himmelblau, who was known for asking questions and trying to get students to change their minds. Dad loved to tell how he was soon the only student in his class confident enough to volunteer the answer. Professor Himmelblau remembered. When Dad was about to get his diploma, the university's Employment Service told him Prof. Himmelblau asked to see him. The finance chairman of Mount Sinai Hospital had asked Himmelblau to recommend an accountant and he chose Dad to apply for the job.

At his job interview, the finance chairman said, "You're only 20 and you've already had three jobs. We want someone who will stay." Dad promised he'd stay as long as the work was interesting...and he stayed for 45 years! He used to say he got infected with the Mount Sinai virus.

## **Dad Starts His 45-Year Career at Mount Sinai**

Coincidentally, Dad's mother was part of the women's group that tried to influence the community to establish a hospital where observant Jews could get kosher food. In a way, his long career at Mount Sinai was given a boost by his mother's actions years before!

Dad joined the Mount Sinai staff as accountant in 1927 and soon changed the accounting system and the way the hospital did business. He immediately insisted that vendors give the hospital a cash discount and a quantity discount. He used cost accounting techniques to show how much it actually cost the hospital to take care of charity patients—making it easier to raise money for this purpose. One board member objected to so many changes and promised to give \$100,000 if things reverted to the old ways. Dad asked the finance chairman what to do. Dad was told to continue doing what he thought right—not to worry about the potential donor because he never gave much money anyway.



**Nate Helman, 1935**

While all this was going on, he decided to take the CPA exam. Unlike most candidates, he did not take a review course. He went alone to a friend's vacant cottage and prepared for the exam on his own, going over and over the material until he was confident he could pass both the written and oral exams.

At the age of 20, he was one of the youngest to pass the CPA exam. But there was one problem: The University of Illinois licensing board didn't think he was qualified for a license to practice. In addition to the fact that he had not reached the legal age of 21, he had never worked at a public accounting firm. The licensing board asked him to prepare a brief to convince them, and he did. He told them that he was already working as accountant for four businesses in addition to his full-time job.

## **'The Nathan Helman School'**

Before long, the University of Chicago Hospital had heard of Mount Sinai's new cost accounting system and sent its administrators over to learn the new techniques.

As Mount Sinai Hospital grew from a 160-bed community hospital to a major urban medical and research center, Dad grew with it. In 1938 he was appointed controller and in 1941 assistant director and controller.

Hospital administration eventually became a profession completely separate from medicine. For years the man who never graduated college trained graduate students as assistants and residents in the same field. He provided the know-how for the future top executives at hospitals all over the country.

## **The War Years**

When World War II started, Dad decided he'd rather enlist as an officer than wait to be drafted as a private. He told the hospital president what he planned to do but the hospital officers prevailed on the draft board to reclassify him as essential to the hospital. To celebrate his guaranteed safety, he bought Mom a pink gold watch with rubies (I have it in my jewelry box). I never suspected he was such a romantic! He joined the neighborhood civil defense organization. I can remember him putting on an identifying armband and going out to meetings and patrol.

Mom asked Dad to help Uncle Nate get a job at the hospital at that time in the hope he too would be exempt from the draft. For several years Uncle Nate worked at the hospital and they used to drive in to work together. (Turns out, Uncle Nate's flat feet were enough to classify him 4-F.)

## **His Career at Mount Sinai**

In 1947 Dad was instrumental in turning the community hospital into a teaching hospital by forging an affiliation with the Chicago Medical School. Next he had the vision to suggest establishing a Research Foundation—Mount Sinai was becoming a major medical center. In 1950, he moved up from assistant to associate director.

Despite his continued success, the board brought in a doctor to serve as Superintendent, naming Dad Assistant Superintendent. For years Dad was a loyal assistant to a relatively incompetent superior. Mother chaffed at the way Dad stayed in the background and secretly went to see one of the more influential board members. He said he knew that Dr. Mannheimer couldn't manage without Dad and suggested that Dad do more self-promotion. Dad refused to say or do anything that would jeopardize his boss's standing or promote his own ability. It just didn't seem like the right thing to do. I don't remember what ultimately brought Dr. Mannheimer's downfall, but Mom didn't live to see her ambition for Dad realized.

## **Getting Recognition at Mount Sinai**

As a CPA, Dad kept working on his four private accounts in addition to working at the hospital. One of his clients owned a fur store on Madison Street. I liked walking there to meet him after Sunday School—to smell and touch the furs. One side benefit—he was able to get Mom a fur coat “wholesale” and when I went to high school he bought me a mouton lamb coat—very warm but also very heavy.

In the late forties, he told the hospital president he felt the hospital should get all of his creative energy, instead of sharing it with his four after-hour private accounts. He was asked how much he made from his outside accounts and said \$2,000. He was told to give himself a \$2,000 raise and stop moonlighting. He soon sold the accounts to an accountant who was also a lawyer. Before the turnover, each client asked Dad to give up the other three and keep only one account—his.

When I was in high school, the people who worked for my dad invited my mother and me to a surprise party to celebrate Dad's 25 years of service. The employees presented him with a gold watch. I was touched to see so many people honoring my Dad. I knew he inspired fear, so I



was thrilled to see that he inspired admiration too. After thanking everyone, he mentioned other employees who had also worked at Mt. Sinai for 25 years or more. Right on the spot he proposed setting up a special program to honor all 25-year employees. This made a big impression on me.

Dad always held himself to the highest moral standard. When attorneys ("ambulance chasers") offered him money in exchange for tip-offs about accident victims, Dad promised to report them to the bar association if he caught them trying such stuff again in his hospital. Any salesman who tried to give him kickbacks got similar treatment.

He grew in stature and kept getting more responsibility as the hospital grew and flourished. Finally, Dr. Mannheimer was forced to resign. Dad assumed he would be named Executive Director and was surprised that a search committee was considering outside candidates. He gave the hospital president an ultimatum—either give him the title and salary of the job he'd been doing for years or he would resign immediately.

Because most hospitals were headed by physicians at that time, the hospital officers were not sure what to do. They asked Dad to accept a one-year appointment as Acting Director. Long before year's end, they decided that Dad was the right man to head this major medical center. He finally got the recognition he deserved. Hospital administration is now a recognized field of graduate study, but at the time he was one of the first hospital chief executives who was not a physician.

In his professional community he was also gaining recognition for his leadership. He was named a Fellow of the American College of Hospital Administrators and was one of twelve executives appointed nationally to recommend changes to the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Hospitals.

When he retired after 45 years, he'd been Executive Vice President for 15 years. Despite all the growth and change during his tenure, when I asked my Dad about his proudest achievement at Mount Sinai, he said it was putting the hospital finances on a business-like basis. He was the first, or at least the first in Chicago, to recognize that charitable organizations would benefit from the same cost accounting techniques used in the business world.

### **Other Activities**

Dad was among the founders of the Jewish Federation of Chicago—bringing competing Jewish institutions into the umbrella group to coordinate fundraising activities and cooperate in developing long-term plans.

Dad served as Financial Secretary of our synagogue for a number of years. At about the same time he gave up his outside accounting clients, he resigned this voluntary account, and, with his Sunday mornings free, he started bowling in a B'nai B'rith league.



**My Dad, Bobby, and me on our first visit to Miami Beach, 1945**

At first he used to practice his approach at home, using Mom's iron to represent the weight of the ball. Before taking up bowling, Dad played handball (starting with his job at Bergman's Health Club). He stopped after someone he knew collapsed while playing and died of a heart attack when he was close to forty. I remember hearing him say, "He was a young man like me" when he didn't seem young to me at all!

Dad taught both Bob and me to ride two-wheel bikes. On one of his last visits he told me that he'd never ridden a bike himself. He had no money for a bike and was too busy working or helping his mother to play after school.

Although he didn't participate in team sports until his early twenties, he was able to keep up with men who'd been playing for years. Bob told me he watched Dad pitch for a softball team in Columbus Park when we lived on Gladys Avenue, across the street from the park (we moved away when I was five so I have no recollection of this). Being ambidextrous, he delighted in surprising batters by switching back and forth from right hand to left. Bob said he also watched Dad play handball at the YMCA, where he used to surprise his opponent by switching hands in handball matches. I can picture him doing calisthenics in the morning when I was little.

### **A Few Characteristics**

Inherently shy, he refrained from public displays of affection. When Uncle Nate and Aunt Rose came to visit, JoAnn and Gail always went around kissing everyone goodbye and sometimes JoAnn would tease him that he didn't want to be kissed. It wasn't until his later years that he took the initiative and kissed me goodbye when he left after a visit. He had little patience for "small talk." He saved his words for important thoughts and ideas.

Despite his generally serious manner, he had a sense of humor. I remember when skim milk first came on the market. Dad was convinced of its health benefits but Bob refused to drink it because of its color. Once when Bob left the table to answer the telephone (at that time, most households had only one phone and answering machines were far in the future), Dad switched glasses with him. Bob returned to the table and we continued to eat our dinner, eagerly watching to see how Bob reacted. To Dad's delight, Bob didn't notice the difference.

Dad was blessed with a keen analytic mind. He could grasp new concepts quickly and see through the details to the "big picture." Until the last few years, he had an excellent memory. He was an optimist, who saw opportunities where others saw problems. And he was a stickler for playing according to the rules, lecturing anyone who played any other way.





**Our family in Miami Beach, 1946**

Dad had many favorite expressions. Bob and I were often reminded, “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing right.” He often said, “The law of supply and demand has never been repealed.” And these are not mere words. He operated under these principles. When we used to drive to Miami Beach in the late ’40s and early ’50s, there were so few tourists in the summer that some hotels actually closed during those months. After our first trip we used to drive down without reservations and Dad would bargain for a better rate—after all, we needed two rooms for two weeks. We’d pull into the driveway of a series of hotels while Dad went in to talk price. It didn’t take more than a few stops for him to emerge triumphant, but I remember how uncomfortable it was waiting in the hot car.

Dad saw himself as our provider and protector. A real gentleman, he always made sure to open and close doors for women. After my mother died, Dad’s sister Anne pointed out to me that not many men would have allowed their wives to take her brother, father, and aunt into the household.

Dad also considered himself a handyman. He had a few essential tools—hammer, pliers, screwdrivers, and wrench—which he kept in an old candy tin about 10 inches in diameter. Whenever he replaced an electrical plug or put up a shelf, he usually said something like, “Not bad for someone with just a few tools. Now if I had a real toolbox I could do even more.” After Larry came into my life I saw what a real toolbox contained. We got one and filled it with a respectable collection for Father’s Day. He acted pleased but I never heard him refer to it again. It was still in pristine condition after he died.

### **Always Ready to Help**

Following the example of his parents, he was very generous with his money, especially when relatives or Jewish charities were involved. During his working years he made a practice of donating ten percent of his income to charity. Even after his retirement he was a generous supporter of the Federation and other causes.

He didn’t want me to apply for a scholarship at the University of Chicago, since he could afford the tuition and didn’t want me to take the place of someone who was not as fortunate. When Alan was three he offered to pay Alan’s nursery school tuition when he realized we couldn’t afford it. I was too proud to accept, but when Alan was four, he went to nursery school on a “scholarship” from his grandpa.



**Grandpa with Alan in 1962**

successes—at one time she was running shops in several Texas towns.

When his mother's cousins in Romania and later in Israel needed help, he didn't hesitate. After the end of World War II, his Tulceanu cousins in Romania wrote asking him to send them penicillin. He quickly deduced that they wanted this new "miracle drug" to sell on the black market to get money to live on... and he sent some. Later, when they got to Israel, he sent them money on a regular basis until they wrote to say they could get by on their own. And when several of mother's Weiss cousins came to Chicago after the war, Dad found a job for one of them at Mount Sinai.

After his sister Dorothy moved to McAllen, Texas, she needed money to open up a dress shop. She didn't have a credit rating, so she asked Dad for a loan. I still remember the discussions at the kitchen table. He didn't want to loan the money because it could lead to an unpleasant family situation if she didn't make payments on time. But he wanted to help. Instead he offered to co-sign a loan for her at his bank<sup>3</sup>. She used to write him regular reports about her problems and



**My parents in 1953 at their niece Joann's wedding in Texas**

When Dorothy's oldest daughter Joann was married, my parents, who had never gone away without us, took the train to Texas to be with Dorothy at that milestone. Mom reported that they were treated royally, and Dad escorted his niece down the aisle.

Years before I started my business in 1981, he repeatedly suggested that I do just that. He was always offering to help set Larry up in business, and later he frequently offered to help Alan, Saul, and Steve do the same.

## **Long History of Investing**

Dad's interest in business and finance made investing in stocks almost inevitable. For as long as I can remember he got the *Wall Street Journal* in the mail at home and studied the stock pages. On occasion he and my mother used to discuss their holdings. When I was packing up the family belongings to move from our large apartment at 7638 Phillips in South Shore to 2930

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<sup>3</sup>3. Years later, when my brother-in-law Si Spielman asked for a loan, I remembered the discussion about the loan and we used this same strategy.

North Sheridan in 1957, I came across a sheaf of stock certificates—some for stock held jointly with my mother and some with Uncle Nate. I got very excited because I was sure I'd discovered a real bonanza. When I showed my find to Dad, he said, "Throw them away—they're worthless." He'd kept those certificates since the Depression (my parents had moved three times since then) but could never bring himself to throw them away.

When I started earning money Dad tried to interest me in the stock market. He picked out a stock—Merck—and we went in as 50-50 partners. I used to check the paper every day and drove him crazy every time it went up or down a fraction of a point. Finally, he could stand it no longer and bought me out!

### **Remote Yet Not Unconcerned**

Until I was grown up, my relationship with my Dad was very awkward. He was a man of few words. Like many men of his generation, Dad held his emotions back and left most of the child-care to Mom. My mother told me Dad wouldn't even push the baby carriage! Usually he'd be aloof until Mom got really upset at something I said or did. Then he'd quietly come to my room and try to reason with me. When he got involved, I knew it was serious.

While growing up I was always trying to assert my rights and Dad did his best to be fair. It seemed to me he spent a lot of time trying to teach Bob how to throw and catch. I'd usually want to have a turn too. Dad often changed the game to "running bases," accepting my argument that it wasn't fair to leave me out.

One of the doctors occasionally gave Dad tickets to professional sports events. Usually he took Bob. From time to time I would protest that it wasn't fair and a few times he took me to basketball games at Chicago Stadium. One night he took me to the Golden Gloves. We sat very close to ringside and I was shocked at the blood and brutality. I can still remember a well-dressed woman in furs shouting "kill 'em!" When Dad suggested leaving early, I was relieved. I never asked to go again. Similarly, after repeated requests, he took me to one football game. We saw the Chicago Bears play the Philadelphia Eagles on an extremely cold day. It was so cold neither of us wanted to stay to see the end of the game.

When I was fifteen or so, Dad went to St. Louis for a professional meeting—his first out of town business trip. He wanted to bring something back for me but didn't know what to get. To say the least, I was surprised when he gave me a false mustache! I guess this proves he had no experience buying gifts for his children. At the time, I was not so philosophical.

During my last year at home Dad and I shared the apartment, the moving, planning the wedding, and other experiences, but I never felt I could completely open up with him. Whenever I needed to talk over decisions with him, he insisted that I have a written agenda—complete with costs, options, and other considerations. In a way this was a good learning experience for me, but the lack of spontaneity made it difficult to be as close as we might have been.

### **Helping Me Gain My Independence**

In school and out, Dad usually showed great confidence in me. When I came home to attend the University of Chicago, it was his idea that I learn to drive. Try as he did to be a patient

teacher, I often ended up in tears. One time I reached for the gearshift without putting my foot on the clutch and he slapped my hand down. He said he had to do it to keep me from stripping the gears on his car. But for a 19-year old this was absolutely traumatic.

Finally Dad said I was ready and told me to set up an appointment to take the test. In those days, everyone told stories about their fathers slipping the examiner ten dollars to make sure they passed. The evening before my driving test, Dad told me he had an important meeting the next morning and would not be able to accompany me. However, since we lived walking distance from the testing site, he would park the car in front of the testing station and I could walk over to take the test.

“If you pass, drive the car home, if you don’t pass, ask the examiner to park it for you.” I was horrified. First, the prospect of going through the exam without any “moral support,” but, more important, who would pay off the examiner, which was a standard practice in Chicago. Dad assured me on both counts: He would not pay a bribe under any circumstances and he was sure I would do just fine on my own. The examiner told me he’d never seen anyone come alone for the test! After putting me through my paces he told me he’d put down 95% because 100% would look “fishy.”

I can still feel the terror of driving to the store for groceries on the way home from my driver’s test. Once I got my license Dad put no restrictions on my driving. When Larry came in by plane the next week, my Dad saw no reason why I shouldn’t drive alone to pick him up at Midway Airport. Every crack in the pavement sounded like a flat tire to me!

Within weeks of getting my license I had a head-on collision! I was on my way home from the U. of C., and was struck by a car mistakenly going off the Midway Plaisance on the entry ramp. I swerved and hit the brakes. Since I had been going slowly, the damage was not as bad as it might have been—the front end was smashed and the radiator broke. I was shaken and very righteous about the “kid” (probably my age) who plowed into me.

When I called Dad to report that I’d had an accident with the car, first he asked if I’d been hurt. I could tell he was skeptical when I said I was not at fault since I was such a novice driver. After dinner we went back to the Midway. The minute I showed him the scene of the accident, he assured me there was no way I could have avoided an accident.

After Mom died, Dad told me he wanted me to continue my education just as before. But soon I found myself taking over most of her responsibilities—buying groceries, cooking, and overseeing our household. It wasn’t too long before Dad put my name on his checking account and entrusted me with paying all the bills as well as balancing the checkbook, just as Mom had done. At the time, I didn’t realize what a show of confidence it was to give a 19-year old unlimited check-writing privileges on the family bank account.

### **Moving and Starting a New Life**

By this time Bob was in the Army and it was obvious that Dad would no longer need a large 6-room apartment after I got married. We shopped for the right alternative, finally settling

on a new high-rise building at 2930 North Sheridan Road. I organized the move, packed our belongings, and selected new furnishings. I sold our dining room set and several other items by posting a note on a tree used for that purpose near the U. of C.!

When Dad and I moved in, I noticed that a very friendly woman always seemed to be on the elevator with us...almost as if she kept going up and down until we got on! Clearly she had identified Dad as “eligible” and was doing her best to ingratiate herself to us both. She even gave me a small wedding present! As it turned out, she was too late.

Dad’s loneliness was so apparent I knew he needed to get out and meet people. One of my parents’ friends, Gladys Gelman, had asked me months before if I would object to her introducing Dad to a friend—Trudy Kane. Soon Dad was seeing Trudy on a regular basis. I was glad to see Dad emerge from his social isolation and grief.

### **Dad Gets Remarried**



**Dancing with Dad on June 9, 1957**

Trudy was born in Vienna and grew up in a well-to-do household in Manhattan. I’ve seen pictures of her in one of the early “horseless carriages” and on horseback. She gave me a small silver tray whose sole purpose was to receive the calling cards of visitors to her parents’ house. She was married to a doctor and widowed at a young age when her only child Pat<sup>4</sup> was just 18 months old. Trudy worked to support herself and Pat in a variety of sales positions, both retail and wholesale.

At one point, as a sales agent for a lamp company, Trudy had a large territory and drove all over the Midwest showing lamps and taking orders. Eventually she opened a wholesale lamp business with a showroom in Chicago’s Merchandise Mart. When she married my Dad, she was a successful business-woman whose income and net worth exceeded Dad’s. She was the only grandma the Kravitz boys knew.

Trudy was a charming and attractive woman. She immediately told me she was not a replacement for my mother and asked me to call her by her first name. I’ll never forget the first time she invited us to dinner. Accustomed to judging portions for herself and Pat, she put exactly two small potatoes for each of us on a serving plate.

When the platter got to Larry, he took three! We did some fast reshuffling and Trudy later joked how totally unprepared she was for Larry’s appetite.

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<sup>44</sup>. Pat married Irv Menachof later that same year and they are the parents of David, Danny, and Paula Menachof.



**My Grandpa with Dad and Trudy on their wedding day, July 1957**

As my wedding approached, Dad and Trudy began planning their own marriage, which was timed to take place when Larry and I returned from our honeymoon. This really upset Nate Weiss—he saw it as an insult to Mother’s memory for Dad to remarry so soon. Bob and I went to see our rabbi, Ralph Simon, and he put a different “spin” on the quick remarriage: He said it showed that Dad had been so happily married it was obvious he wanted to return to that state as soon as possible.

Trudy was a last-minute addition to the guest list of my wedding; she stayed discreetly in the background so as not to offend my mother’s side of the family. For years the Weisses tried to include Dad and Trudy in family get-togethers but the situation was always strained.

Trudy moved into Dad’s apartment on Sheridan Road, but she immediately started looking for an apartment where they could make a fresh start together.

Soon they bought an apartment in 3750 N. Lake Shore Drive, with 24-hour doorman, indoor swimming pool, and other amenities.

Trudy closed her business and became an active volunteer at Mount Sinai. She also took painting lessons and their apartment walls were soon decorated with her own oil paintings.

Naturally, being an accountant, Dad started doing Trudy’s taxes. He saw that she was getting income from some apartment buildings in the slums of Chicago. They drove to see her investments and he asked her to sell them as soon as possible, which she did. He wouldn’t be a “slum-lord” and didn’t want his wife doing anything that didn’t meet his ethical standards.

### **Working at a Meaningful Retirement**

Before retiring from Mount Sinai, he got a complete physical and learned that he had high blood pressure. He immediately eliminated all salt from his diet and began taking a brisk walk every day for exercise. He also started learning to use the golf clubs that he got as a retirement present from the Mount Sinai Board of Directors.

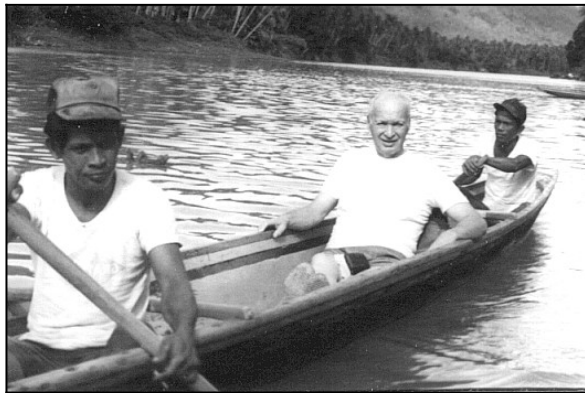
Just as he did with most things, Dad planned his retirement very carefully. He knew he needed to keep active mentally as well as physically. Before the actual retirement, he wrote to volunteer his services to the Illinois Hospital Board, Service Corps of Retired Executives (SCORE)<sup>5</sup>, and several other state and city organizations.

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<sup>5</sup>5. The Service Corps of Retired Executives, a project of the U.S. Small Business Administration, helped prospective entrepreneurs by matching them with experienced counselors for help with planning, accounting, and business strategies.

Some of his volunteer work involved overseas assignments. Through the International Executive Service Corps he and Trudy went on 3-month assignments in Chile, the Philippines, India, and Mexico, where he was always treated with great respect. He was given a living allowance in local currency and, contrary to the usual practice, always returned any unspent part of the allowance at the end of each assignment. One opportunity he did turn down was to serve in one of the Arab countries, saying that Jews were not truly welcome there.

He volunteered at SCORE for many years. He'd take the bus part of the way downtown and walk the remaining mile for exercise. For some years he served as chapter president; he also gave workshops in bookkeeping and accounting, and willingly provided advice to all who sought his help starting up a new business or making an existing business more profitable. His creative ideas and optimism helped many prosper and he enjoyed telling us about the advice he gave his "clients". He was also instrumental in starting a similar organization to help the city's nonprofit organizations. On several occasions he was interviewed on the radio, television, and newspapers for his volunteer work with SCORE.



**Dad on one of his overseas trips**

He also served as an expert witness for some years and was pleased to be paid for his expertise. He would be called on to testify against hospitals (except Mount Sinai and

Michael Reese) involved in malpractice cases. He delighted in telling us about his experiences in litigation. His usual technique was to get a copy of the hospital's by-laws and use his knowledge of JCAH and hospital administration to convince the plaintiffs' attorneys to settle cases before they went to trial.

Alan had heard these stories enough to make a point when complaining about cutbacks at Shady Grove Hospital in 1999. He looked up the by-laws and pointed out how the staffing loads violated the hospital's own standards.

After Dad had been out of the day-to-day operations of hospital management for twenty years, he told his clients he was obsolete—they should have younger, more up-to-date consultants. His last assignment was teaching his replacement how to analyze the rules and the evidence and then use the facts to provide convincing answers.

### **Importance of Family Ties**

Most years, Dad and Trudy settled into a routine of coming to our house for the first few days of Passover. They came to all the boys' *brisses*, *bar mitzvahs*, college graduations, and to Alan and Saul's weddings.

Starting with our years in Schenectady, Dad enjoyed bowling with Larry and the boys. Trying to be helpful, he was quick to point out their errors—a practice that occasionally drove Saul and Steve to tears.



**Dad and Trudy with 1Dad and Trudy with Alan, Saul, and Steve, Passover 1968**

One year Dad and Trudy went on a European trip and bought chess tables for themselves and their children. On his next visit to our house, Dad taught Alan how to play chess. Saul picked up the game too. Both like to tell how their Grandpa beat them in just a few moves shortly after they learned to play. He believed that part of learning to play was learning to lose, and he tried to teach them how to lose graciously as well as how to win.

After Saul and Beri moved to Israel, Dad came to visit us every time Saul came home. Actions speak louder than words: He wanted to stay close to Saul despite the physical separation.

As Trudy's heart started to weaken, he took over all the household chores, including cooking and laundry. Pat Menachof assured me her mother would not have lived so long if she hadn't had Dad taking such good care of her (she died right before her 90th birthday).



**Grandpa visited Alan's new office in 1990**

When Trudy became too frail to travel, Dad came alone to Alan's graduation from Medical School. After her death he went to Israel by himself in 1992 at age 85 to attend Nadav's *briss*. Instead of paying the posted cab fare, he took pride in bargaining for a better price. He held Nadav during the circumcision, just as he had held Alan, Saul, and Steve. He came to Rockville to take part in Steve's wedding in 1995 and returned the following fall for the conversion ceremony for Benjamin and Daniel.

From 1992 to 1996 his sister Anne set up a regular Saturday night date with Dad. On alternate Saturdays she would make dinner for him and the next week he would treat her to dinner in a restaurant, or later, at the Hallmark where he lived. They continued seeing each other regularly until a few months before her death in April 1997. They had been close as youngsters and, thanks to her initiative, they grew close again as oldsters.





**Anne helps her 'baby brother' celebrate his birthday.**

He was determined that Sarah Helman and Paula Menachof become friends—they lived across the street from one another and shared many interests. He made a number of efforts to invite them to dinner with him and finally he succeeded. Before long, they became best friends.

He was with us in July for Evan's *briss* and again in December '97 to participate in the naming ceremony for Elana and Talya, Saul and Beri's twin daughters. Bob and Janet accompanied him for the latter as they thought he was not up to traveling alone any more.

He'd sit in the living room and you could always see a twinkle in his eyes as he watched the great-grandchildren. He was amazed when 3-year-old Ayelet beat me at a memory game. He asked if I was letting her win. I wasn't. He tried the game with her and was even more amazed when she beat him easily. The last few years he would just settle down in the armchair and watch the little ones play. When I offered him the option of having the whole downstairs to himself or sleeping upstairs with the tumult and the shared hall bathroom, he always preferred staying where the action was.

### **Winter Trips to Florida**

For a number of years, he and Trudy used to spend January and February at a seniors' hotel in Bradenton, Florida. They stayed in a decaying hotel far below their Chicago standard of living. There he enjoyed golf, walking, and bridge, a game both he and Trudy played with some skill. For some of those years, his sister Anne joined them. After Trudy's death, Dad and his sister went to Florida together for several years until the winter of 1997 when Anne's health was failing and Dad stopped driving.

For some years Alan and later Alan and Sandy visited him in Florida. Part of Alan's visit was playing golf with his grandpa. Sometimes Alan and Sandy went bowling with him and, unlike his grandsons, Sandy appreciated his advice on technique.

### **Health Problems**

In 1985, while in Florida, Alan noticed that my Dad stopped to urinate several times on the golf course. Alan suggested that he get a checkup. Fortunately, Alan's observation resulted in timely treatment of Dad's prostate problem and early detection of his colon cancer.

At the age of 77, he had surgery for colon cancer barely three weeks before Saul's wedding. He was determined to come to the wedding in Pittsburgh and he did. The doctor recommended radiation therapy. Dad asked about the survival rates for those who were treated (60 percent) vs. those who went untreated (40 percent). He recast the statistics in a more optimistic way and decided not to undergo the radiation treatment.



**Larry and my Dad review Saul and Beri's marriage contract in August 1985, three weeks after his cancer surgery.**

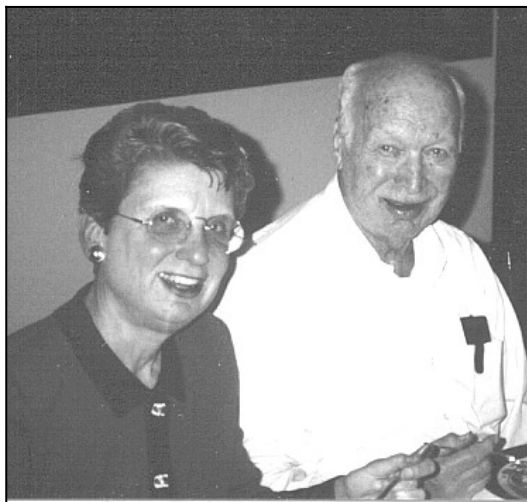
He heeded his doctor's advice and completely changed his diet to include more fresh vegetables and roughage and less beef. Whereas I had never even seen broccoli or a number of other vegetables in the house as a youngster (he was strictly a meat and potatoes man), he started eating raw vegetables, having fish several times a week, and drinking lots of water every day.

Over the years he had several attacks of kidney stones, some of which were attributed to an excess of uric acid, a condition akin to gout (his sister Anne had gout). He was put on medication and was very careful to follow orders and protect his health. He also had developed glaucoma and put drops in his eyes every day.

As the years passed he fell down several times in his apartment and on his walks. He also had several infections that incapacitated him and required medical attention. He continued to grow more hard of hearing. At first he denied having any problem. When he finally got a hearing aid, he rarely wore it—he said it was too noisy. I was concerned that he was missing more than he realized and gave him some brochures and newspaper clippings about a new generation of digital hearing aids. We found them by his bedside after his death.

### **The Last Few Years**

In 1996, Bob and Janet convinced Dad to move from the apartment at 3750 N. Lake Shore Drive to a smaller apartment in the Hallmark, an independent-living residence for seniors at 2690 Lake Shore Drive. He had resisted the change for several years, but after he moved he told me he was sorry he hadn't moved sooner. He also told his sister Anne that she should move there too.



**Nathan Helman at his 90th birthday party**

Although the Hallmark offered many activities—trips to theaters and museums, bus service to shopping and his synagogue, various exercise and activity groups—Dad never took advantage of any of them. But he found the emergency call service reassuring and did make appointments with the nurse who came to take blood pressures twice a week.

Whenever we spoke on the phone, he was always very terse. No news...he was "managing fine." Then he would ask about each of his grandsons and their families—just another reminder that beneath the stern

and stoic exterior was a warm-hearted family man whose love and interest were always hovering just below the surface.

In his 90th year he made a few concessions to his advancing age: He canceled his subscriptions to *Barrons* and the *Wall Street Journal* (his reading speed had slowed down). He replaced his 16-pound bowling ball with a 12-pound one. But he walked over a mile to the bowling alley carrying the ball! Right up to the end, he continued to bowl on Sunday mornings with friends from the years in Austin. Occasionally, if the weather was too bad to walk, he'd bowl during the week as well.

Instead of playing golf every day, he cut back to every other day (but he still walked to and from the Lincoln Park golf course). He continued to enjoy several vigorous walks every day. His morning walks inspired me to do the same as soon as I began working at home as a freelance copywriter.

### **Celebrating His Last Birthday**

For his 90th birthday, Bob and Janet arranged a lovely family party. Except for Saul, Beri, Nadav, and the newborn twins Talya and Elana, the entire Maryland contingent flew to Chicago to celebrate.

Larry and I arranged for a festive *Shabbat* dinner in a private dining room at the Hallmark on the night before the party. We scoured the local stores for wine and *challah*.

While we were setting up the dining room, the kids were enjoying free run of the lobby. They made such a joyful presence from the usual sedate atmosphere, one woman gave the kids a dollar. We tried to give it back but she said they had provided more entertainment than she'd had in years!

The dinner was an emotional one, especially as we said the “*She-he-che-yanu*.” You could feel his love and appreciation as the dinner progressed.

We stayed in a hotel nearby and returned to the Hallmark for breakfast on the morning of his birthday. He was very proud to show off his family to his neighbors.

The party on November 15 was also very special, mostly because his entire family was there to celebrate. He sat back and enjoyed the dinner and toasts. We all felt very fortunate that he was still healthy and vigorous—not many men his age lead such active lives and get to enjoy 10 great-grandchildren.

### **Active to the End**

For many years Dad's routine included a brisk walk before breakfast and one or two more walks during the day—he estimated he walked about five miles a day. On Monday, January 12, 1998, he was on his regular morning walk when a truck made a reckless left turn into the pedestrian crosswalk. He fell, hit his head, and lost consciousness immediately. He was

rushed to the nearest trauma center (Illinois Masonic Hospital), where the trauma team tried their best to bring him back to consciousness.

When it was obvious that Dad was injured beyond help, Alan accompanied me to Chicago to urge Bob and the surgeons to stop the interventions. By the time we got there, the doctors had come to the conclusion that Dad was not going to get better. With Bob's and my approval, Alan turned the machines off. Dad's heart was so strong it continued to beat for several hours before he took his last breath on January 17, 1998.

The funeral was held at Anshe Emet, the synagogue Dad had joined over thirty years before and the site of his 1931 wedding to my mother. Alan, Saul, and Steve spoke very movingly at his funeral. In fact, one of the men Dad ate with every day at the Hallmark said he had learned more about Dad at the funeral than he had during their daily dinners together. He said, "I only hope my grandchildren talk so well about me at my funeral." Dad is buried with my mother and his parents in Westlawn Cemetery. We are very grateful to have enjoyed his love and wisdom for so many years.

While others might think him cold and remote, Alan, Saul, and Steve felt their Grandpa's unspoken love and support grow stronger over the years. Now they enjoy repeating some of their Grandpa's pet phrases of advice: Don't force it. Don't complain about paying taxes—it means you're making more money. No one ever got a medal for paying more taxes than they have to. And the all-time favorite: The law of supply and demand has never been repealed.

When Alan and Sandy had their third child the following year, they named the baby in honor of Alan's grandpa. On May 14, 1999, we welcomed Natalie (Nechama) Anne Kravitz into the world.

# **Celebrating the 100<sup>th</sup> Birthday of Nathan W. Helman**



November 15, 1907 – January 17, 1998

## **He often told us...**

The law of supply and demand has never been repealed.  
Bulls make money, bears make money, pigs get slaughtered.  
No one ever got a medal for overpaying his income tax.  
Paying income tax is a privilege – it shows you're making money.  
If you look up, all you'll see is your lousy shot.  
If something's worth doing, it's worth doing right.  
Don't force it.

# Milestones & Markers

Born	November 15, 1907 to Jacob and Tillie Helman
Graduated	1924 Carl Schurz High School – commercial course
First jobs	Delivery boy for a downtown store and bookkeeper for his mother's fabric store during high school years
Education	Northwestern University – School of Commerce (nights) 1930 Diploma in Accounting (48 credits)
Honors	Award for student highest in leadership and scholarship
CPA	1931
Career start	1927 Accountant at Mt. Sinai Hospital
Marriage	Ester Weiss December 13, 1931 – March 30, 1956
Father	Bob (January 27, 1934) and Margie (March 26, 1937)
Career ladder	1938 Controller 1941 Assistant Director and Controller 1950 Associate Director 1962 Executive Director 1972 Retired as Executive Vice President
Marriage	1957 – 1992 to Trudy Kane
Grandfather	Alan 1958, Saul 1961, Steve 1965 Marcus 1960, Adam 1963, Sarah 1966 David, Daniel, and Paula Menachof
<i>Sandek</i>	Alan, Saul, Steve, Nadav
Favorite sports	Bowling and Golf
Favorite pastimes	Being with grandchildren and great-grandchildren Reading, crossword puzzles, Scrabble
Favorite foods	Steak, roast beef, potato <i>latkes</i> , sardines, ice cream

# Memories of My Dad

My Dad was a real *mensh*. Thoughtful, polite, caring but not demonstrative, he took pride in his accomplishments and those of his family. He enjoyed his annual visits to us in Arlington, Schenectady, and Rockville and always wanted to stay up to date on everyone's activities and achievements. I'm sure he would be very proud of this family today.

He was very generous, always making sure that his charitable gifts amounted to at least ten percent of his income. He also felt responsible for helping his family financially...his cousins in Romania and Israel, his parents, his sister Dorothy, and us. When Alan was four and Larry was still a graduate student, Dad gave Alan a scholarship to nursery school – "He's a bright boy." He repeatedly offered his help to us.

He was a man of principles and integrity. When the University of Chicago offered me a scholarship, he made me turn it down. Why? Because he could afford to pay my tuition and accepting a scholarship might keep a truly needy student from getting an education. When attorneys offered to pay him for names of accident victims, he not only refused, he threatened to report them to the bar association if they asked anyone else for this information. Although most fathers slipped the examiner ten dollars to ensure their kids a passing grade on the driving test, he refused to do so. "You'll pass because you can drive properly."

He was a stickler for rules, for himself and for others as well. Whenever he played games with me – Scrabble, chess, card games – he never bent the rules. He played to win. The first time I beat him at Scrabble, my mother assumed he had let me win. He explained that I could feel good about winning fair and square...something I couldn't do if he'd "let" me win. That was the way he played and that was the way he lived his life. When the auto-makers had just started producing cars again after World War II, Dad asked a friend with a Pontiac dealership about buying a new car. His friend told him he'd have to pay "under-the-table" money to get one of the scarce new cars. Objecting to this, Dad was shocked by his friend's response: "Nate, there are no angels in the automobile business." Needless to add, we did not get a new car that year.

Dad took good care of himself and of Grandma. Pat Menachof said her mother would never have lived so long without Dad's taking care of her. His daily walks inspired me to go for a walk every morning when I started working from home. As I got close to retiring, he advised me to follow his example – stay physically and mentally active and get into a routine of volunteer activities. This helped him lead a full and satisfying life almost to the end.

He was an optimist – I guess most golfers are – and encouraged others to be so also. We can all learn from him as we celebrate his wisdom, caring, and presence in our lives for so long.



**New father - 1934**



**1936 – Age 29**



**1942 (age 35) with Bob (8) and me (5)**



**1954 My parents (age 47)**



**1957 My wedding (age 49)**



**1961 Grandpa (54) took Alan (3) for a pony ride.**



**1963 Grandpa (56) with Saul and Alan**



**1965 Grandpa (58) and Grandma after Steve's *briss***



**1968 Grandpa (61) plays chess with Saul.**





**1969 Visiting Grandpa (62) and Grandma**



**1972 Grandpa relaxing  
on our porch after  
Alan's *bar mitzvah***



**1982 Proud to join us for Saul's  
graduation from Hopkins**



**1977 Celebrating his 70th  
birthday with his children and  
grandchildren**

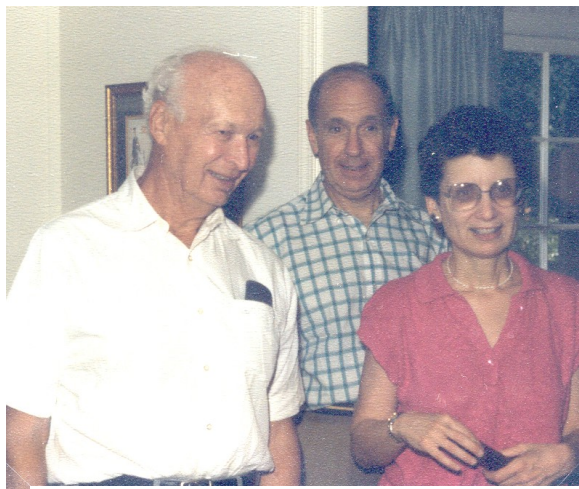




**1982 Celebrating his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday**



**1985 Celebrating Saul & Beri's wedding**



**1987 Celebrating our 30th anniversary**



**1987 80th birthday party**

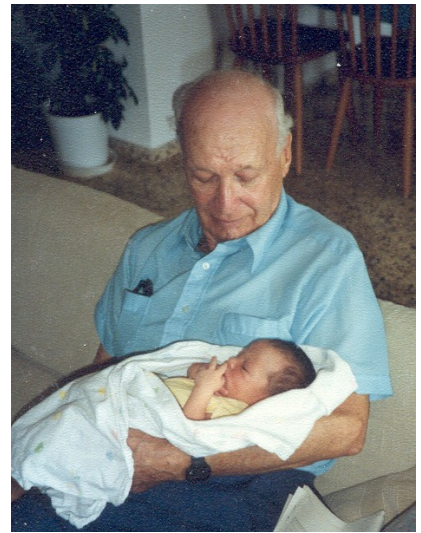


**1990 Checking out Alan's new office**





1991 Passover visit (age 84)



1992 In Israel for Nadav's briss



1992 With Ayelet



1992 Celebrating his 85th birthday



1995 At Steve's Wedding



1994 Great-grandpa (87) with Nadav



1995 Ayelet with Great-Grandpa





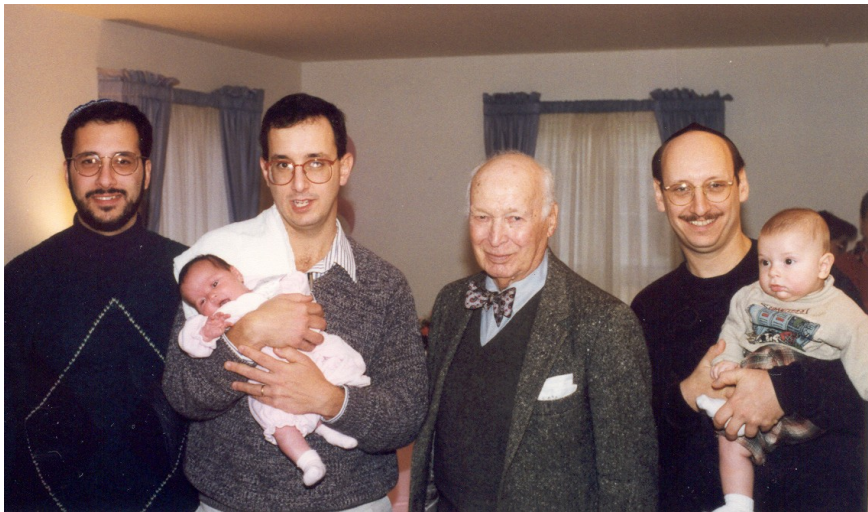
**1996 Great-grandpa (89) and Grandpa  
enjoy a game of golf**



**1996 Great-grandpa with Danny**



**1997 Great-grandpa meets his  
new great-grandson Evan**



**1997 Baby naming for Talya and Elana**



**1997 Celebrating his 90th birthday**

### PART III - GROWING UP

March 26, 1937...Erev Pesach and time for me to be born. Mom told me she couldn't imagine sitting through the Seder at her in-laws when she felt so uncomfortable. Remembering an old "*bubbe meisa*" (Yiddish for old wives' tale), she got down on her hands and knees and scrubbed the kitchen floor, hoping to bring on labor. It worked! Dad took her to Mount Sinai Hospital instead of the Helman Seder, and I was born on that cold winter night at 10:45 p.m.

When my brother Bob was a baby, Mom followed her doctor's advice and fed him formula on a schedule. He was a very cranky, colicky baby. He was also a very hungry baby. When I was born three years later, she was determined not to make the same mistake twice.

Regardless of what everyone else was doing, she breastfed me. She said she'd nurse me whenever I cried and I was a very contented baby. I heard this story many times and it had the desired effect: I followed her example. When Alan was born, my doctor was aghast when I told him I intended to breastfeed my baby— "What? Like the natives in Africa?" I ignored his attitude and Alan was indeed a contented baby.

**CITY OF CHICAGO**  
BOARD OF HEALTH

EDWARD J. KELLY  
MAYOR

HERMAN N. BUNDESEN M. D.  
PRESIDENT

**Notification of Birth Registration**

*This is to advise you that there is preserved under File No. 11838*  
*in the Board of Health of Chicago, Illinois, a Record of Birth*  
*of* Marjorie Ruth Helman *Sex* Female  
*Born on* March 26, 1937 *at* Mount Sinai Hospital  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS  
*Name of father* Nathan Woltzer Helman  
*Name of mother* Ester Weiss  
MAIDEN NAME ADDRESS  
5572 W. Gladys Avenue  
*Birth attended by* Henry Buxbaum, M. D.

Herman N. Bundesen  
PRESIDENT OF BOARD OF HEALTH

My Birth Certificate - March 26, 1937



## Just Starting Out



Here I am at 5 months

My mother told me I was born with so much hair I got my first haircut in the delivery room. She wrote notes in the margin of Bob's baby book (she apparently lost enthusiasm for recording every milestone the second time around), and recorded that I talked sensibly at 13 months but didn't walk until I was 15 months old.

I grew up in Austin, a middle-class neighborhood near the western city limits of Chicago. My earliest memories begin when we lived in a 2-bedroom apartment across the street from Columbus Park at 5572 Gladys Ave, near Central Ave. My parents had the front bedroom, and Bobby, as he was known then, and I shared the back bedroom. Aunt Nettie slept on an enclosed porch. There were lots of kids to play with nearby.



Me at 2 1/2

When I was 5 we moved into a 3-bedroom apartment (5461 Washington Blvd.) about a mile away. Here, Bob got his own bedroom and I shared mine with Aunt Nettie—my mother's aunt, who was like a grandmother to me.

My hair was in long curls until I was 5. Curly hair gets tangled, and I used to cry when Mom combed it. After repeated warnings, she took me to the barbershop with Bob and had my hair cut short before I started school. Mom saved one long curl as a reminder of my former glory. I continued to have my hair cut at the barbershop for several years and I cried every time because I thought the barber made me look like a boy!

Our Washington Blvd. apartment was on the top floor of a three-story building. My mother frequently reminded me not to run or jump inside, because I might disturb the neighbors downstairs. I promised myself not to impose such restrictions on my kids when I was a mom (as in "no ball-playing in the house"). During the winter I often had the hated assignment of going downstairs to ask the owner to "please send up more heat." Invariably the landlady would say it was too hot downstairs.

## My Brother



Me with my big brother, 1940

Bob, who was three years older than me, enjoyed the privileges of being older and stronger. I was a typical little sister...nagging for attention, easy to push around, and, overall, much impressed by my big brother. I can still hear the whistling sound of his corduroy knickers.

When I got to Emmet, our neighborhood elementary school, all the teachers knew Bobby and I hated it when they told me they expected me to be smart like him. By the time I got to Austin High School, I was trying to follow in his footsteps and work on the Austin Times. When I went off to college, he was a trusted friend and adviser.

## Health

During the long Chicago winters, my Dad used to rent a sunlamp, and we'd take turns lying under it for a specific number of minutes, wearing special goggles. I'm not sure why my parents considered this important for our health. Despite their best efforts, I had all the usual childhood diseases—I even had mumps and chicken pox at the same time (an unbelievable mess!). The one thing I remember about the mumps is having some evil-smelling black ointment smeared on my cheeks and covered with a cloth napkin tied around my head.

When I had the measles, my bedroom was kept darkened and I remember begging my mother to tell me stories of when she was a girl. She'd say, "You already heard them all," but I wanted to hear her tell them again.

After I got over the measles, I was taken to the hospital for a chest x-ray, and Dr. Padnos, our pediatrician, saw a suspicious spot on my lungs. He was worried I might have TB, an obvious concern since my mother's father had died of TB. That whole summer I led the life of a semi-invalid... very little exertion, lots of fresh air and healthful food plus chocolate malted milks (with surreptitious instructions to the "soda jerk" to mix in an egg). Fortunately I gained weight and energy but from that time on, Mom and Aunt Rose thought I needed extra precautions because of my frail health. Periodically Dad would take me to the hospital for chest x-rays. Many years later when I asked Dr. Padnos if I'd actually had TB, he said I hadn't.

In those days pediatricians saw sick patients in their homes. Dr. Padnos would thump my chest and back, listen to me breathe, take my temperature, and look into my eyes, ears, nose, and throat. While repacking his black bag, he'd tell my Mom what to do. She always paid him in cash. Our community was like a small town, so when Mrs. Padnos paid Mr. Fine, the butcher,

with cash from a brown paper bag, people suspected that the doctor was not reporting all his income to the IRS.

When I was seven, I got a splinter in my thigh while changing my skates on a bench at the school playground. It went right through my heavy woolen snowpants. Mom took the splinter out with tweezers, but she missed one fragment. Some weeks later I had a festering infection several inches from where she removed the splinter. Dr. Padnos came to take care of it. I remember laying face down on my parent's bed. I don't remember kicking him in the face when he dug into my backside, but apparently I did because after that he used to ask me to promise not to do that again whenever he saw me.

Getting me to eat healthful foods was not easy. I refused to even try most fruits and vegetables and I was often reminded about my request for Aunt Nettie to peel my grapes. I wouldn't eat strawberries because of the seeds! I was also a slow eater. For years Al Bloom (a family friend) used to tease me, saying, "By the time we're ready for lunch, Margie is just finishing her milk from breakfast. When you get married I'm going to bring a bottle of milk to your wedding." (He didn't do it.)

## Broken Leg



Grandma Helman, Mom, Aunt Nettie and me, 1943

Since we lived just a block and a half from school, I often went to the playground on my own. In the winter, the playground was flooded for skating and I used to try skating. I didn't complain about wearing Bob's outgrown black hockey skates instead of the white figure skates most girls wore.

When I was 8, I got in the way of faster skaters and fell down trying to get out of their way. I couldn't get up. People tried to help me get up but I couldn't bear any weight on one foot. Fortunately a friend's father was there and he picked me up and drove me home. Mom had him put me on the living room sofa. She consulted a paperback book, "What To Do 'Til the Doctor Comes." First she tried ice packs then hot packs. Then she called Dad.

Dad came and took me to the hospital, Mount Sinai naturally, for x-rays. They said my leg was broken and it would have to be set in the operating room. I didn't know what a "broken" leg was, but I knew what an operation was and I was afraid they would cut my leg off. I remember Dr.

Aries (he was so-o-o tall), the orthopedist, trying to distract me until the anesthesia took effect.



He asked questions like “Where do you live?” and “What’s your father’s name?” I was annoyed with this obvious attempt at diversion since everyone at Mount Sinai knew my Dad.

When I woke up, I was afraid to look at my foot. I was encased in a plaster cast from the top of my thigh to my toes. After Mom assured me, I looked down and, to my great relief, I could see both of my feet.

On the ride home from the hospital my mother noticed a safety patrol boy standing in the middle of the street. She said, “Look at that foolish boy. He’s not supposed to be in the middle of the street, he’s supposed to keep one foot at the curb.” Then she noticed that this fearless patrol boy was none other than our Bobby!



**Me at 10 with Mom**

Because we lived on the third floor and my cast was so long and heavy, I spent most of the next few months confined to our apartment. I had crutches but the cast was too heavy for me to *shlep* around so Dad rented a wheel chair for me to use around the apartment. I missed three months of school.

My classmates came to visit, bring schoolwork, and tell me about school. Mostly they wanted to play games and eat Mom’s cookies. To pass time during the day, I’d read, do schoolwork and listen to the radio (no TV at that time). I also started taking piano lessons, as did my brother (when I passed him, he quit). To give me something to do, my Mom gave me boxes of family pictures to organize and put into an album.

At the semester’s end, despite my 3-month absence, my report card showed that the teacher wanted me to skip a grade again (the first time was in first grade). My parents wouldn’t allow it—too much for a “frail” child. The following year’s teacher made the same recommendation, and, after much discussion, I skipped ahead one semester.

Being inactive for three months made me slightly chubby. The doctor assured me that as soon as I got active again I’d slim down. He was right... but it took some time and I still remember being self-conscious about my appearance.

## First Trip to Florida



Our family in Miami Beach, 1945

When my cast finally came off, my leg looked wrinkled. Mom was told to massage it with cocoa butter. It smelled like chocolate and we both loved the wonderful aroma! I had to learn how to walk all over again. Bobby got me started by coaxing me from chair to chair in the living room. Before I could walk normally we took our first trip to Florida by train to spend Passover with my grandparents, who had moved to Miami Beach the year before. It was April 1945, and World War II was not over yet. We were almost the only civilians on the train. I couldn't walk too well yet so I'd hold on to the seat arms and go swinging down the aisle through the cars.

We spent a lot of time at the beach in Florida and I got very tan. Grandma told Mom to keep me out of the sun or I'd get sent to the back of the train on the ride home! (In those days segregation was legal in the South and there was separate seating for blacks and whites on

buses and trains, and separate water fountains, washrooms, schools, and most public facilities).

### The Weisses

Uncle Nate had been a favorite uncle from the start. I don't remember him living with us, but I'm told he did before he got married. I went to his wedding when I was 18 months old. Aunt Rose claims I used to give her dirty looks for taking "Unc" away, just as Gail Spielman treated me when I married her favorite uncle.

Unc had a long face, a jutting jaw, and a lanky look. I always thought of him as tall, but later, when I saw him next to Larry, I realized that he was not very tall. He had a way of sitting with one leg wrapped around the other. When my Dad saw Grandpa Weiss for the first time, he recognized him immediately from the way he sat with one leg wrapped around the other. I used to sit like that too.

Aunt Rose had a round face and thickset body. She was very outspoken, except with my Dad. She was a nurse at Mount Sinai and was usually subdued in Dad's presence. She was fun to be with, especially when my parents weren't around. She'd say, "Don't tell your Dad, but..." She liked to knit and made mittens and ear-warmers for Jo, Gail, and me.

We used to see Uncle Nate and Aunt Rose every week—either at our house or theirs. During the war-caused housing shortage, they shared an apartment with Aunt Sadie in a building she owned. Later they moved to an apartment just five or six blocks from us.



**Uncle Nate, Aunt Rose, and JoAnn**

Visiting Aunt Rose and Uncle Nate was always special. Aunt Rose used to make my favorite chocolate cake with chocolate frosting (even when Mom thought I shouldn't eat chocolate). Uncle Nate usually clowned around with us. He never tired showing us card tricks or telling jokes and riddles. Once Bob complained about something, and Unc opened his wallet and gave Bob a card with a printed message: "I have never met anyone with as much trouble as you. Please accept this card as a sincere token of my sympathy."

I loved playing with my cousins JoAnn and Gail, 5 and 8 years younger than me. I used to save my allowance to buy JoAnn birthday presents at the dimstore, often choosing what I later learned were Easter baskets. By the way, the dimstore was actually called the five and dime, and sold toys and notions, many of which did cost a dime or less. When I got to be 12, I started baby-sitting for Jo and Gail: I would often sleep over so Unc wouldn't have to go out again late at night to drive me home. Once when Jo and Gail were at our house, I made good on a threat and playfully pinched JoAnn's nose with a pliers! She made a big fuss and I got scolded, something we laughed about for years.



**Me with Jo and Gail 1947**

One wintry Sunday when I was nine, Mom, Dad, and Bob had the flu. To get me out of "sick bay," Uncle Nate took me to work with him at Victor's, the woman's clothing store where he was the accountant. The closed store was unheated, and Uncle Nate thought I'd be cold. He bought me a red wool Eisenhower-style jacket that became my most treasured article of clothing for several years.

## Other Relatives on Mom's Side



Me with Aunt Sadie, 1944.

We'd often visit my Mom's Aunts Nettie and Sadie Lapporte. Their faces always brightened when we came in. Aunt Sadie had a record-player that could make recordings as well as play them. Bob and I used to like reciting poems and singing and then hearing the results played back from small blue wax records. He usually hogged the show, and during one recording session I could be heard saying, "When I'll be 8 and you'll be 5..." I got teased about that for a long time. Aunt Sadie taught me "*Off'n Pripichok*," a Yiddish song we liked to sing.

We'd visit my Mom's Uncle Dave and Aunt Reva every few weeks. Dad saved cigars he'd been given by new fathers (a custom then) for Uncle Dave. As soon as we'd come in, Uncle Dave would say, "Come on Nate, join me in some '*shnapps*'" (whiskey). Dad would drink it down in one gulp, like medicine.

Dave Lapporte's army service in World War I left him partially deaf in one ear. He was very proud of his service to his country and, to the amusement of his family, always marched in Memorial Day parades wearing his Veterans of Foreign Wars uniform.



Me with Aunt Rose, Aunt Nettie, and JoAnn 1944

I loved to listen to the patter of the Lapporte kids—Esther, Allen, Seymour, who were 11, 9, and 7 years older than me. I thought they were funnier than any comic routine. Allen and Esther used to joke about the problems of working for their father at Bar Foods (the product was dried fish and the fishy smell gave them plenty of room on the bus!). Uncle Dave used to blow the *shofar* for his congregation during the month of Elul (I'm not sure whether he did it on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur also), and his kids complained about his early morning practicing. I never understood why they referred to their parents as "father" and "mother"—most kids we knew called their parents "mom" and "dad."

When the Lapportes were invited to our house or the Weisses', they usually arrived late. Once, Aunt Rose invited Dave and Reva for one hour before everyone else, just to make sure they'd come on time. Then, Esther Moss told her parents the party was an hour before that, not knowing that Rose had already provided the extra hour. By coincidence, they were tired of being teased about being late, and they made a determined effort to come at the appointed hour. They arrived so early Rose didn't know what to do with them while she finished dinner preparation

and got dressed.

Some Sundays we went to see Mom's cousin Esther Steiner. The two cousins liked to reminisce about growing up in South Chicago, where they were known as the "black Esther" (she had black hair) and the "red Ester (Mom had red hair)." Esther and Morrie Steiner also had a son and daughter—Bob and Carol. Occasionally we'd see Esther's brothers, Sam and Iz, "the Weiss boys"<sup>1</sup> there too. I always thought it was funny that grown men were referred to as "the Weiss boys."

### **Dad's Sisters and Their Families**

Dad's sister, who we called "Auntie Anne," and Uncle Eli Bernard had three children: Natalie, 10 years older than me, Don, 6 years older than me, and Judy, 1 year younger than me. Natalie was sufficiently older than me that she paid no attention to me at all. Don usually paired up with Bob, and I usually played with Judy.

Don developed a rheumatic heart after a strep throat infection and trying to keep him from being too active was a constant worry for his parents.<sup>2</sup> When he could no longer roughhouse, he tried to coach Bob—telling Bob that his deepest eyes were ideal for a boxer! Don had his own car as soon as he could drive. Once he took us for a ride in a car with a "rumble seat" and another time in a convertible with the top down.



**Dad's sister Dorothy with her daughters Joann and Shirley**

Going to the Bernards was fun until I broke my leg at about the same time they got a new dog, a boxer named General. General took one look at my crutches and behaved in such a menacing way he had to be locked in the basement. I'm sure this contributed to my fear of dogs. They owned their own house—a first for our family—so there were lots of places to hide and play. Uncle Eli was very musical and they had both a player piano and an organ.

The Bernards moved to Florida in about 1946, when I was nine or ten. After that, we saw them on our annual trips to visit our grandparents.

Dad's younger sister Dorothy had two daughters, Joann, six years older than me, and Shirley, four years older than me. At family get-togethers, Joann and Shirley usually played with Bob, since they were close in age.

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<sup>1</sup>1. Their father was the brother and one-time partner of my Grandpa Weiss, and my Aunts Nettie and Sadie thought he had cheated my mother and Uncle Nate out of their rightful share of their mother's estate. At first it was hard for Mother to have anything to do with them, but over time she let bygones be bygones.

<sup>2</sup>2. Don eloped and moved to South Carolina in 1950 and I didn't see him again until his mother's funeral in 1997. The boy they didn't think would survive to adulthood looked terrific at age 66.



**Me with my cousin Judy and our Grandpa in Florida 1946**

Aunt Dorothy was the “black sheep” in the family. Not only did she have a wisecrackin style, but she also got married and divorced three times during my childhood. I’m not sure when she and her daughters moved to Florida, but I have no memories of visiting them in Chicago or vice versa. When they lived with my grandparents in Miami Beach, we’d see them on our annual visit. Eventually Dorothy got married again and moved to McAllen, Texas.

Dorothy had a lovely white Samoyed dog named Skippy, whose real name, according to JoAnn and Shirley was “Skipiteranium Theodore Roosevelt.” He was a real charmer and I loved playing with him. One day I was toying with his leash—something my Grandpa asked me not to do—and Skippy barked, indicating that he wanted to go out. Grandpa said he didn’t usually go out at that time, but since I had teased him by handling the leash, I’d have to take Skippy for a walk. I was worried I’d get lost, but Skippy knew the route and led me on it.

By the time I was eleven, I spent most days in Miami Beach socializing with kids around the hotel pool. My hair got quite streaked in front from chlorine and sun, and I could hardly believe my ears when my Aunt Anne complimented me on my decision to bleach my hair.

## Expanding Horizons



**Aunt Rose and me**

Sunday afternoons our parents often took Bob and me to one of Chicago’s museums. My favorites were the Rosenwald (now called the Museum of Science and Industry) and Brookfield Zoo—one of the first zoos to use moats and natural habitats instead of cages. When we went to the Rosenwald, on Chicago’s South side, we sometimes stopped off to visit the Steiners or Aunt Anna and Uncle Jim Loebner. (She was Grandma’s sister—to distinguish between the two Annes, we called her “Aunt Anna” and Dad’s sister “Auntie Anne”). Uncle Jim was a former newspaperman whose very name conjures up the smell of cigars.

Several years in a row, Mom took Bob and me to the circus when it came to Chicago Stadium. Then, when I was eleven or twelve, Uncle Nate and Aunt Rose bought tickets for me to take JoAnn. This would free them from taking her and be a treat for both of us. Uncle Nate dropped us off, and we came home by bus. As luck would have it, that was the year one of the “Flying Wallendas” didn’t fly as expected. When we got home, no matter how I tried to change the subject, JoAnn kept talking about the accident, much to the dismay of her tender-hearted father.

Many weekends in the summer Mom packed a picnic and Dad took us to one of the nice Lake Michigan beaches, either in Chicago or at the Indiana Dunes State Park. The Weisses often joined us.



**Me and Bobby in Michigan City  
on the “Crow’s Nest” porch.**

Until we started going to Florida, my folks used to rent a cottage called “The Crow’s Nest” in Michigan City, Ind., for a month. Dad would drive us down and return for two weekends and spend the last two weeks with us. I can still picture him arriving tired and sweaty, changing into his swimsuit, and walking into Lake Michigan with a bar of soap to freshen up.

One summer, Dad was hospitalized with pneumonia (very serious before antibiotics) and Aunt Nettie stayed at the cottage with us while Mom remained in Chicago with Dad. On July 4, I burnt my fingers on a sparkler and Aunt Nettie liked to remind me how I kept asking her to blow on the burn to ease the pain.

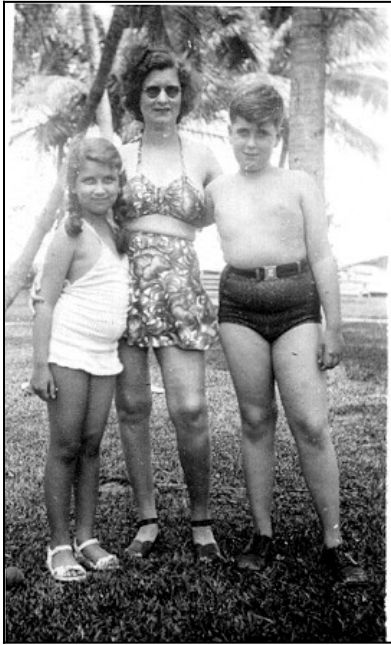
Part of most summers I went to day camp in Columbus Park—where I enjoyed games, crafts, and sing-alongs. I also used to participate in activities year ’round at the school playground two blocks from our house. That’s where I first played Ping-Pong, the only “sport” I could hold my own in. One year I learned to play the ukelele at the playground. The uke was a small guitar-like instrument from Hawaii,

popularized by Arthur Godfrey, a radio personality.

### **Driving to Florida**

Starting in 1946 when I was nine, Dad drove us to visit his parents in Miami Beach every summer. He got new AAA maps and guides every year. At first, he drove about 350 miles a day, but as he got more experienced and the roads got better, he’d try for 500 miles.

I always wanted to stop at interesting sights but Dad usually wanted to drive a few more miles. After about five years of begging, I got him to promise before we left home that we’d stop to see Seven States From Lookout Mountain (as it was advertised on barn roofs for miles around Chattanooga). That year, the day we went through Chattanooga was rainy and foggy. I still haven’t seen it!



**Mom, Bob, and me in Florida**

I saw many other things of interest. I saw segregation, cotton fields, and rural poverty close up. Going through Georgia, I saw chain gangs—black prisoners chained together doing roadwork under the watchful eyes of rifle-toting white troopers. I remember tasting truly tree-ripened peaches for the first time, all fuzzy and dripping with nectar.

On the way home in 1946 we went to Washington, DC, for several days. I saw a senator read the Bible during a filibuster. I saw Mount Vernon, the White House, and the Lincoln Memorial, and I climbed 555 steps to the top of the Washington Monument. When we took Alan, Saul, and Steve to the Capitol in 1968, the tour guide's talk sounded like the same script I'd heard in 1946.

Most of the highways were simple two-lane roads in 1946, so one of the features of our first trip was going on the Pennsylvania Turnpike—one of the first limited-access superhighways. We marveled at the tunnels blasted through the hills. The other thing that stands out about that trip was my

parents discussing plans for Bob's bar mitzvah the following winter. I took these annual trips for granted, but most of my friends had never been so far from home.

### **Friends and Values**

My friend Merle Phillips had two things I envied—a baby brother and a dog. When I came home from Merle's house I often told Mom that I wished I had a baby brother or sister. She explained that she and Dad had put off having a third child during the uncertainties of World War II and that too much time had passed to have another baby. I assured her I would be a big help but it did no good. She finally gave a reluctant yes to Bob and my pleading for a dog, on the condition that we keep it in the basement.

One Sunday Dad took Bob and me to a kennel. As we considered various dogs for our pet, Dad asked if we really had the heart to do this to Mom—a loving mother who did so much for us even to the point of agreeing to having a dog even though she was afraid of them. When Dad put it that way and offered to buy us a Ping-Pong table for the basement, we agreed to forget about having a dog. Mom was very relieved when we came home empty handed.

My friend Joanne Goldblatt and her older sister were always coming up with new ways to make fun of their deaf grandmother, who shared their small apartment. They'd pretend to sing while only moving their lips so all you could hear was the grandmother's thin quivery voice. This was so against the values I'd been taught that I never could laugh along with them.

During a safety campaign in third grade I signed a pledge not to be a "jaywalker." I remember being downtown with Mom and refusing to cross the street in the middle of the block because I had promised not to. To this day I am reminded of this promise every time I cross the street against the light!



## **Activities**

Despite all my playground activities, I was a dud at sports. Not because I didn't try. When teams were chosen, I was invariably chosen next to last... right before a girl with one leg shorter than the other from polio! When girls played jump rope, I was one of the first out. And it seemed to take me forever to learn to ride a bike in those days before training wheels. Dad would hold the seat and run beside me in the alley next to our house. Once I learned, I loved bike-riding and the freedom it brought me, but I never mastered the running start most kids use. One of my favorite destinations was an ice cream store about a mile away. They had wonderful ice cream cones for only a nickel a scoop.

Once a year (or maybe every other year) my parents took us to Riverview Park, an amusement park. I was the only one who wanted to go on the rollercoaster and a ride called "Shoot the Chutes." My parents wouldn't let me go alone, so Dad went with me. When I heard him scream on the rollercoaster, I asked him if he was scared. He said he was just equalizing air pressure! The next time I was on a rollercoaster was in 1974 when we took Saul and Steve to Disney World. I screamed! I then realized what a good sport my Dad had been to go with me all the time. I also decided I didn't want that experience again.

## **Love of Reading**

I loved to read and as soon as I was able to go to the library on my own, I made frequent trips there, about a mile from my home. I usually took as many books as I could carry. I took the bus to within two blocks of our apartment and stagger the last few steps because I'd overestimated how much I could carry. I also bought books with my own money. Mom said I didn't read books, I devoured them—once I got into a book I had to keep going.

Many mornings I awoke early and read in bed until Dad came to wake me up for school. At night I sometimes sneaked in extra reading by flashlight after my parents thought I'd gone to sleep. I didn't know until I started writing this memoir that Dad used to do the same thing.

One of my favorite book series was about "Cherry Ames, Student Nurse." The stories made me think I wanted to be a nurse. I told Dad, but he convinced me that I wouldn't like being a nurse because I'd have to clean bedpans and do other unpleasant tasks. I read and reread *Heidi*, *Pollyanna*, *Rebecca of Sunnybrooke Farm*, *The Moffats*, and other books on my shelf.

When the game Scrabble came on the market we had one of the first sets—my parents thought it was a good learning tool. I enjoyed playing with Dad. While many parents would bend the rules to make things easier for their kids, my Dad didn't. Mom got a kick out of me competing with Dad ... and I'd take advantage of this by challenging him to a game right after supper when I should have been drying the dishes. (Dishwashers hadn't been invented yet.)

## **Household Jobs**

One favorite activity was baking with Mom. I enjoyed doing things with her and learning how to make the things I liked best (chocolate chip cookies, chocolate cake and frosting). Of course, licking the bowl was an added reward.

Dusting was my least favorite chore. When told to dust, I did as little as possible... and it showed. I sometimes helped by ironing pillowcases and Dad's handkerchiefs.

One of my regular tasks was polishing our brass candlesticks. We had two sets, both solid brass—one, about 9 inches tall, was my mother's, probably a gift when she got married (Bob and Janet have that set). When I got married I took the three large candlesticks I use every week. In 1965, Aunt Sadie saw me polishing the candlesticks and told me that, as the youngest in her family, she used to polish the same candlesticks. The difference was that I was using a brass cleaner and she scrubbed them with sand at the riverbank. I must have liked polishing as I recall shining my Dad's shoes whenever I polished my own.

### **Sleep-Away Camp**

When Bob was 11 he went to summer camp for a month. From that time on, he made his bed every day—this alone made the expense worthwhile for Mom. When I was 11, I went to Camp Wewaneeta. I was only supposed to stay for a month but when my parents came on visiting day I begged to stay for the second month. I had cut my hair into bangs like my counselor's. On visiting day, my bunkmates kept coming over and asking if my mother was angry. She didn't say a word about it. So much for my act of rebellion.

I actually won second place in the camp Ping-Pong tournament! I came home with a medal to prove it.

One of the unforgettable adventures at camp was our overnight. We took our bedrolls and the counselors brought provisions for the bunk. Under their direction, we set up camp in an open field next to a fence. For dinner we cooked hotdogs and potatoes over an open fire. We toasted marshmallows, sang every song we knew, and told spooky stories before bedding down for the night. I awoke the next morning, looked up, and saw a huge tongue hanging over me! The fence we slept next to was there to keep cows in the pasture and the cows apparently were pretty curious about us.

To Mom's great disappointment, sleep-away camp didn't turn me into a neatnik like Bob. Bob's room was neat and he played down his intellect to be "one of the boys." I was just the opposite: my room was messy and I liked getting good marks in school. To give you a feeling for parents' expectations in those years, Mom used to say, "Bob's room is so neat and Margie's is so messy. What a shame Margie wasn't the boy and Bobby wasn't the girl." Actually, Bob didn't become very competitive until law school, where he graduated with honors, member of the law review, etc.

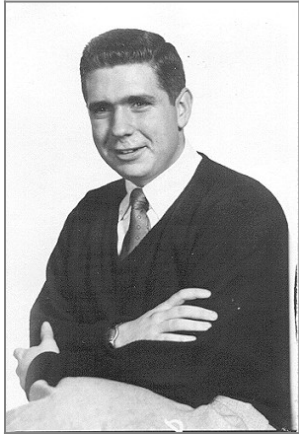
### **Growing Up With Bob**

I was a pesty little sister, and Bob often resorted to fairly rough treatment to remind me who was boss. I was subjected to the hammerlock, the half-nelson, and other forms of coercion. When I went to camp I was surprised to discover that I missed my big brother, even if he did throw me on the couch once in a while.

I tagged along with Bob as much as possible... usually walking in the gutter alongside him and his pals Kenny Glick and Jordan Sachs when they had to take me along with them to a

movie, a ballgame, or a park. In fact, I was with the boys so much I considered myself a “tomboy.” I preferred jeans to skirts and absolutely refused to wear patent-leather shoes (“mary-janes”), frilly dresses, or anything pink—they were for “sissies.”

Bob and I used to get a weekly allowance. I used mine for the weekly movie and an occasional book or record. I always saved up for gifts for Mom and Dad’s birthdays and anniversary. Bob tended to spend more than he saved and often asked me for a loan to tide him over (which I usually did).



**Bob at 16, 1950**

Bob’s bar mitzvah was in mid-January 1947. My parents spent months planning this major family event. I remember helping my Mom carry newly polished silver trays, including the heavy rectangular one Steve now has, to the synagogue on one of the coldest days of the year. We had to walk very carefully because the sidewalks were covered with ice. I can’t remember being jealous that he was having a bar mitzvah, since he had gone to Hebrew school and I hadn’t. What I do remember is that we had liquor left over from the Saturday night bar mitzvah party that was virtually untouched until Bob’s law school friends finished it off ten years later.

Like me, Bob was a “wannabe” when it came to sports. He liked to pretend he was the radio announcer of baseball and basketball games and he acted out the games as he described them. In high school, he knew he’d never make the basketball team, so he became the team manager.

When Bob and I were 18 and 15, our parents left us home when they took the train to Waco, Texas, to attend the wedding of our cousin JoAnn Sternberg (Aunt Dorothy’s oldest daughter). Since Aunt Dorothy had no family nearby, Dad felt they should go. Mom and Dad were treated royally and Dad escorted the bride down the aisle. That was the first time they went away without us.

Bob was in charge when they were away and I got sick. He wanted to take my temperature as Mom would have done, but no matter how he threatened or cajoled, I absolutely refused to cooperate.

### **Once I Was Tall!**

To look at me now you would never know that I used to be tall for my age. I remember one winter, my friend Joanne and I were throwing snowballs at cars driving on the street in front of my house, which was U.S. Route 20 through Chicago. A man parked his car at the curb and got out to scold us for doing something that could cause an accident. When he finished the lecture he said to me, “You’re the oldest, you should know better.” I was scared, but why should I take the blame? I hastened to tell him that I was the younger one.



**Graduation from  
grammar school. I  
was almost 13.**

Until the middle of high school I was one of the tallest girls in my class even though I was the youngest by at least a year. When class pictures were taken, I always stood in the back row. I reached puberty at age 11... long before any of my friends, even before my mother presented “the facts of life” (I thought the blood of my first period was a result of falling in the playground!). I reached my full height at age 12 and continued to think of myself as tall until college when the photographer for a group picture asked me to move from the back row to the front.

In high school I didn’t want anyone to know how young I was. Being relatively tall and well-developed, I was able to pass for someone older than I really was. Dad heard me lie about my age so many times, he said sometimes he’d forget how old I really was.

When I got to high school, I signed up for an ushering service. As ushers, we could see all the downtown plays for free. My friend Joanne’s older sister put our names in when I was barely 13. The minimum age was 16, but they didn’t check. We went downtown by bus and saw all the big musicals and popular plays - that’s when I started enjoying the theater.

### **First Jobs**

The year I turned 15 I wanted to get a job and make money. But saying I was 16 wasn’t good enough—employers wanted to see proof. Since I was a good typist, Dad suggested that I work as a volunteer secretary at Mount Sinai, with the understanding that I’d get a paying job the following year if I proved my services worthwhile. He kept his word

As soon as I turned 16 my Uncle Nate got me a job as a stock girl at Victor’s on Saturdays. I was supposed to keep returning dresses to the racks from the fitting rooms and making sure the racks were in order. If the store was very busy I was expected to help the customers in the fitting rooms. I hated that! I was repulsed by the assorted body shapes and odors. But I stuck with the job and saved my money. When I went away to college I felt very good being able to buy all my own clothes (using my employee discount for such “necessities” as cashmere sweaters).

As a high school senior and college student I worked as a summer relief secretary at Mount Sinai. Occasionally people tried to get me to influence Dad. For example, the head switchboard operator took me into the switchboard room and pointed out how crowded it was.

Part of my job was typing up the schedules for interns and residents. Some of the residents were from other countries. Two residents from Iran became friendly with me and one hinted about marriage. I was very flattered until Dad explained that they wanted to stay in the U.S. and marrying a citizen would accomplish just that! I also used to set up the conference room for meetings and was struck by the wild doodles left behind after meetings of the neuropsychiatry department.

## **Jewish Experiences**

We didn't have a kosher kitchen, but my mother bought only kosher meat and fish. Ours was a strongly Jewish home.

My parents were founding members of the Austin Jewish Community Center—an unaffiliated congregation with a rabbi who, I later learned, was a yeshiva classmate of my brother-in-law Meir Ostrinsky. As in many synagogues, the membership included a wide range of Jewish observance. When a friend's grandfather had a stroke and was unable to walk to *shul*. I was appalled that the rabbi advised him to pray at home. That seemed cruel.

Mom always made sure I had something new to wear for Rosh Hashanah. After junior congregation the kids hung out in front of the *shul*, playing a game called "flinch." My big challenge was sneaking past the ushers to sit in the adult services. I loved reading what I later learned was part of the *Shma*—"with all thy heart, with all thy soul and with all thy might"—and Yom Kippur's poetic "Lo as the potter moldeth the clay." I can still recall some of the congregational melodies from those days.

On Rosh HaShonah, my mother and I used to leave services early to get the big holiday dinner ready for the rest of the family. It bothered me that we never got to stay 'til the end. As an adult I never even considered leaving services early to get the holiday dinner ready for everyone else.

Every year during the High Holiday services the rabbi would lecture parents to send their daughters as well as their sons to Hebrew School (most girls, like me, attended only Sunday School).

I started Hebrew school when I was eight. Then I broke my leg and missed most of the first year. The following year, Mom worried that piano lessons and Hebrew School would be too much for me. Since Mom didn't drive, I'd have to walk the mile or so to the synagogue after a full day at school. I was too frail! Since I was doing so well with the piano, that was the end of my Hebrew education.



**Confirmation Day**  
 Rabbi Lehrfield said I could be valedictorian or president of my confirmation class. I chose president. I gave a speech as class president and played the piano

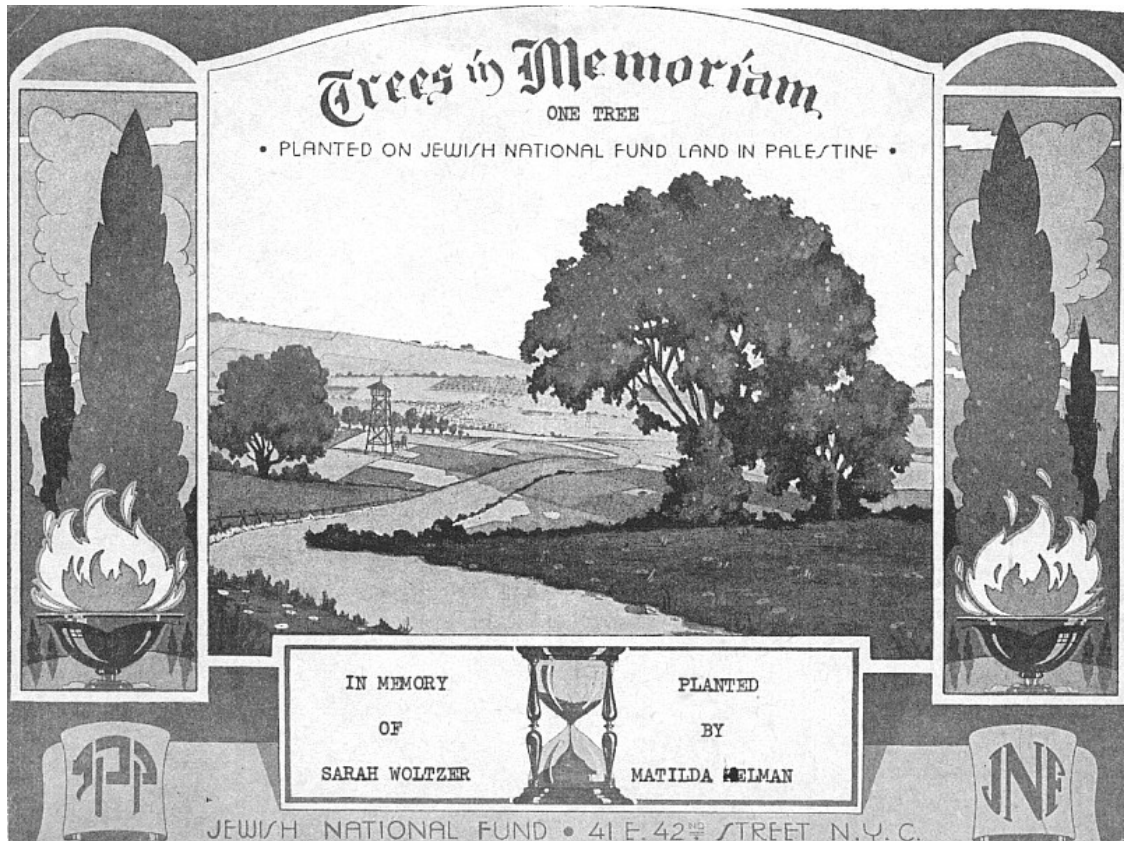
<i>Austin Jewish Community Center</i> 116 SOUTH CENTRAL AVENUE CHICAGO 44, ILLINOIS	
<i>Confirmation Exercises</i> SUNDAY, MAY 28, 1950	
<b>PROGRAM</b>	
Processional.....	Miss Shirley Sklar
Address of Welcome.....	Marjorie Helman President of Class
Benediction.....	Cantor Aaron Kritz
Invocation.....	Marjorie Helman
<b>GRADUATES</b>	
A Brief Review of Jewish History.....	Joanne Goldblatt Valedictorian
Piano Solo "Aragonaiso" by Massenet.....	Arlene Vollen
Introduction.....	Sandra Joy Davidson
Zionism.....	Maureen Vollen
Song "Ani Mamin".....	Confirmation Class
The First Zionist Congress.....	Arlene Vollen
The Balfour Declaration.....	Marlene Joyce Bubar
Piano solo "Valse in E. Flat" by Durand.....	Sandra Joy Davidson
The Mandate.....	Betty Sue Siegel
Expansion and Progress.....	Sandra Wolf
Song "Shomar Yisroel".....	Confirmation Class
Partition and Statehood.....	Marla Rae Golden
Hadassah.....	Barbara Goldstein
Hebrew University.....	Marcia Sue Sachs
Piano Solo.....	Marjorie Helman
"Prelude in C# Minor" by Rachmaninoff.....	
Closing Prayer.....	Joanne Goldblatt
Gift Presentation.....	Marla Rae Golden

I attended Sunday School until I was confirmed at age 15. I've always regretted not learning Hebrew and I tried to master it at Hillel classes at U. of I. and at adult education classes in Schenectady and Rockville... but it's much easier to learn at age 8 than as an adult.

At Passover, my Mom always made at least one *Seder*, and sometimes two. Dad presided and did some of the service in English so we could all understand. We always had *Seders* with Uncle Nate, Aunt Rose, JoAnn, and Gail. Mom never accepted an invitation unless her brother had a *seder* to go to as well. One year I invited my friend Joanne to our *Seder*, and, unaccustomed to drinking wine, she fell asleep at the table.

My family had always been Zionists. In a box of photos I got from my Aunt Anne, I found Jewish National Fund certificates for trees my grandparents donated for Palestine from the 1920s. On the whole, I felt very good about being Jewish. I joined a Young Judea chapter and enjoyed Hebrew songs and dances.

I was very excited and a little confused when the State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948. I remember listening to the UN vote on Israel and the assassination of the UN mediator. I wondered if all Jews would move to Israel. I was relieved to learn we would not be leaving the world I was so comfortable in and took pride in learning the new ending to "*Hatikva*."



**Early Jewish National Fund Contribution Certificate**

I can recall only one incident of anti-Semitism. When I was in fourth grade a girl accused me of “killing our lord.” Of course I denied it, but I didn’t have a clue what she was talking about. At home, Mom explained the basics of Christianity to me.

Still, when a high school friend didn’t get into Wellesley College despite being second in her class, managing editor of the *Austin Times*, and president of the National Honor Society, we assumed it was because she was Jewish. If this could happen to her, it could happen to me. I set my sights on Brandeis University, the new Jewish school where there was no Jewish quota.

## **World War II**

Some of my earliest memories are linked to World War II. My parents used to sit in the living room listening to the war news on the radio and they followed the war’s progress in the newspaper. Every time we went to the movies we saw a newsreel about the war and the suffering of soldiers and civilians. Playing with Bob and his friends, we reenacted many of the scenes as well as some we made up. I never realized until much later that “hangrenades” were actually “hand grenades.” Despite my protests, I’d usually end up being the nurse. These mock battles gave me nightmares but I never turned down an opportunity to play with Bob and his friends. During the war, every person had a ration book for basic foodstuffs. Americans were limited to half a pound of sugar a week and modest amounts of meat and butter. Families were

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION		664737 AW		VOID if altered	
<b>WAR RATION BOOK No. 3</b>				O.P.A. VALID UNOT. Address and Sig. VALID WITHOUT STAMP	
Identification of person to whom issued: PRINT IN FULL					
Marjane (First name)		R. (Middle name)		Helman (Last name)	
Street number or rural route 5461 Washington Blvd					
City or post office Chicago			State Ill		
AGE 6	SEX F	WEIGHT 60 Lbs.	HEIGHT 4 Ft. - 11 In.	OCCUPATION school girl	
SIGNATURE Marjane R. Helman					
(Person to whom book is issued. If such person is unable to sign because of age or incapacity, another may sign in his behalf.)					
<b>WARNING</b> This book is the property of the United States Government. It is unlawful to sell it to any other person, or to use it or permit anyone else to use it, except to obtain rationed goods in accordance with regulations of the Office of Price Administration. Any person who finds a lost War Ration Book must return it to the War Price and Rationing Board which issued it. Persons who violate rationing regulations are subject to \$10,000 fine or imprisonment, or both.			<b>LOCAL BOARD ACTION</b> Issued by _____ (Local board number) _____ (Date) Street address _____ City _____ State _____ _____ (Signature of issuing officer)		
OPA Form No. R-130					

#### My wartime ration book

limited to 3 gallons of gas a week. There were blue and red ration tokens issued every month. We patriotically collected old newspapers and tin cans and brought them to school for paper and scrap drives. And kids used to buy savings stamps, which we pasted in a book, to do our part for the war effort. For some reason bubble gum and Wrigley's tutti-fruity gum were almost impossible to get during the war years.

No consumer cars or trucks were produced from 1942 to 1945 because the automakers were making tanks and trucks instead. Before the war, women used to wear silk stockings but silk, and later nylon, were no longer available because the material was needed for parachutes. The newspaper occasionally had pictures of women lined up for blocks when a store was rumored to have nylon stockings. Because of the shortage of both silk and nylon, women took extra good care of the stockings they had, mending them as best they could. A gift of nylon stockings was a treasured gift. I remember Aunt Rose, in desperation, used leg makeup instead of stockings!

One of my parents' friends was drafted and sent us a snapshot and letters from "somewhere in the Pacific." I remember Mom worrying that Dad or Uncle Nate would be called up too. I knew that Jews were being persecuted and killed, but not the full horror of the Holocaust. Several refugee children, both Jewish and non-Jewish, joined my class and their transformation to Americans made a lasting impression.



I was out walking with my grandparents in Miami Beach when the news broke that President Roosevelt died. People were crying in the street and reminding each other that “he was such a friend to the Jews” (which we now know was not the case).

When I asked Aunt Rose what she knew about the Weiss family during the war, she told me that one of Grandpa Weiss’s brothers had remained in Berlin as proprietor of Weiss Lumber Yard. When the war started, he and his wife sewed gold coins between layers of their clothing and made their way to Poland with their two sons. After the Nazis took over Poland, the Weiss contingent somehow got to Siberia. Not only did they manage to stay alive, but they also prospered. They were able to get some of their gold to London and New York.

A year or two after the war’s end some of these cousins came to the U.S. I’ll never forget the emotional evening they came to our house, all smiles full of gold teeth. They hugged each of us and each time they exclaimed, “cusina.” It seemed miraculous that we had cousins who lived through the Holocaust.<sup>3</sup>

### **B’nai Brith Girls**



**Me at BBG District 6  
Convention - 1952**

When I got to high school I joined BBG (B’nai B’rith Girls). I enjoyed activities in our chapter and the expanding social opportunities as I moved from chapter to citywide activities. I mastered the fine points of Robert’s Rules of Order and as a sophomore I was elected chapter president. For our chapter’s service activity I set up a candy-striper program at Mount Sinai.

At the Chicago Council, one of my first achievements was starting a citywide newsletter—the Windy City Breeze. I also used my love of writing to write song parodies for BBG programs. One was to the tune of Tzena, Tzena: “Pesach, Purim, and Yom Kippur, don’t they make you feel real chipper, in the BBG.”

I went to what seemed like zillions of meetings and planned lots of programs. Mom worried that I was spreading myself too thin to accept any new responsibility. The night of the Council elections in my junior year, she begged me, “Please don’t come home Council president.” But I liked being in charge and, although I did no electioneering, I couldn’t decline when I was nominated and elected president of the Chicago Regional Council of BBG. The Council was made up of more than a dozen chapters in the Chicago metropolitan area and sponsored many citywide events.

As Council president I went to even more meetings downtown at night. In addition, I usually met with the professional staff on the afternoon of a Council meeting and stayed downtown for the Council meeting. We lived on the major bus line and the bus stop was a half-block from my home. Mom used to sit in the window, anxiously watching for me.

In my senior year, I went to the District convention in Lansing, Michigan. I had a great time with girls from all over the Midwest and Canada. Again, without electioneering, I knew I was going to be nominated for District president (one of 6 or 7 in the country). This time Mom

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<sup>3</sup>3. Aunt Rose told me that one of the Weiss cousins had been a medical student in Germany — Dad helped him get a job as a lab technician at Mt. Sinai Hospital. He eventually bought a medical lab in downtown Chicago.

gave me an ultimatum: Either be District President *or* go away to college, but not both at the same time (my “frail” health struck again). So I retired from public office at age 16.

### **Social Life**

Years of hanging around my brother’s friends put me at ease with boys - I always had friends who were boys but never many “boyfriends” like my friend Joanne. When I did go on dates and to parties it was usually with boys I met through BBG-AZA activities and usually with boys who were several years older than me. Most lived on the South Side so they had to be able to drive to take me out.

Since wearing glasses wasn’t as common then as it is now, Mom encouraged me to leave my glasses at home when I went to social events. I couldn’t understand that—I assumed boys would be attracted by my wit not my looks! One boy I used to date wouldn’t put his glasses on until after he started the car (I thought that was pretty funny).



### **Me on dates at Brookfield Zoo, a prom, a birthday celebration, and at an Artist’s Ball**

As a junior I was actually invited to proms on two consecutive nights. The prom pictures from the second night show me with big dark circles under my eyes - I was exhausted from the tradition of partying way into the wee hours. The following year I decided to miss my own prom because the only boy who asked me wasn’t Jewish. Mom was surprised I’d forego my prom, yet pleased that I made my decision without asking what to do.

I met Richard Krause in Florida when I was just a freshman in high school - my folks saw him hanging around and just assumed he was a friend of Bob’s. One Sunday afternoon, he came over unannounced to show me his new car. I wasn’t home but he couldn’t have come at a worse time - Mom had just found evidence of a mouse in the kitchen. She and Dad had torn the kitchen apart and were stuffing steel wool between the kitchen floor and the molding. This was someone she was trying to impress! Rich never mentioned the incident to me and continued to call me after he went away to college. We dated on and off until he graduated college, several years before me.

### **Importance of Family**

In our house the importance of family was stressed, both by word and deed. I felt especially close to the Weisses and my great aunts Nettie and Sadie. This sense of family is what I missed most in raising my own family... and what I looked forward to when my sons became adults. Just as I envied friends who had younger siblings, Steve was jealous that David Golub had grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins in Schenectady and he didn't. I understood his feeling exactly.

Mom was so protective of Uncle Nate and so willing to open her home and heart to family—at various times her brother, father, and aunt were taken into our household. Dad told us how his mother regularly sent money to her cousins in Romania. When the war ended, they wrote him asking for the “miracle drug” penicillin (not daring to mention that they needed it to exchange for currency on the black market) and he sent it.

Many other examples come to mind but the lesson was always clear—we help our family in any way we can.

### **Bob and I as Grown Ups**

When Bob got to law school, his circle of friends were all high achievers. That's when he quit fooling around and became a high achiever too. For some reason, none of his law school friends were Jewish. He had been to their homes and wanted to reciprocate so he asked me to make a dinner party for his friends. I was happy to oblige. Several were heavy drinkers and, after a lot of drinking and boasting, one fellow proceeded to make a number of long-distance calls from our phone. (!) I had never witnessed such behavior.

We took pride in each other's achievements and still do. At Northwestern he was on the Law Review and graduated with “Order of the Coif.” Before graduation Bob went on a number of job interviews. Once he went to New York City and brought us back a cheesecake from Lindy's. One of Chicago's oldest law firms, Isham, Lincoln & Beale, offered Bob his first job as a lawyer. Not only had they never hired a Jew before, but many law firms expect their associates' contacts to be a source of business, and the Helmans had none to offer. Dad and I were very proud to see Bob's career start out so well.

I'll never forget the excitement when Bob passed the bar. As the date of expected test results loomed near, he asked me to call him at work every day after I got the mail. The day his notice arrived, he asked, “Is the envelope thick or thin.” “Thick.” That's all he needed to know. He didn't want me to open it, but I shared his joy, knowing how important this was to him.

Soon he was drafted into the Army. He wrote home often. As soon as basic training was over, he wrote asking me to send a suitcase with his “business” clothes and he was very specific: One tweed suit with vest, one green foulard tie, shirts, shoes, sox, and even his fedora hat, then favored by gentlemen of style. I had to squash the hat down to fit into the suitcase.

He was stationed in New York when he met Janet. They came to visit us one weekend when we lived in Arlington, Mass. Later, when things got serious, he set up a rendezvous in Old

Sturbridge Village so I could give him our mother's diamond ring to use as an engagement ring. They were married in Des Moines, where her family lived, when Alan was just 3 months old.

I'm proud of my brother and his achievements. As managing partner of Meyer Brown he created a well-known law firm with offices Washington, New York, Japan, and London and other countries.

He is very generous with his money, making major gifts to UJA Federation in Chicago, endowing a scholarship in Janet's honor at Barnard College and a fellowship at the University of Chicago Medical School in gratitude for excellent care he received there. He has been a generous supporter of Northwestern University Law School, the Joffrey Ballet, where Janet serves on the board, and a number of other organizations. He took on a protective role for the Weisses, and he bought a new car for Gail Weiss to use for Aunt Rose. Without being asked, he sends them money each month to pay for Rose's therapy and other expenses.

Because I grew up sensing the closeness of my mother and Uncle Nate, I just assumed my brother and I would always be close too. It is very painful to me that we aren't.

## **WHERE I'VE LIVED**

### **CHICAGO**

1. 5572 Gladys Ave. — 1937-1942
2. 5461 W. Washington Blvd. — 1942-1955
3. 7638 S. Phillips — 1955-57
4. 2930 N. Sheridan Road — 1957

### **DAYTON, OHIO**

5. 5732 Gross Drive — 1957-58

### **ARLINGTON, MASS.**

6. 47 Newport Street — 1958-1963

### **SCHENECTADY, NY**

7. 885 Cunningham Court — 1963-1973

### **ROCKVILLE, MD**

8. 7128 Wolfree Lane — 1973-

## THE WAY IT WAS

Austin, the community I grew up in, was a white-collar neighborhood. Although a few of my friends' families lived in single-family houses, most lived in small 3-story apartment buildings. There were alleys between most streets. Occasionally, a man with a horse-drawn wagon would come through the alley delivering ice (before everyone had a refrigerator) and buying old clothes. Before we got our first refrigerator, we had an icebox with a door to the outside. The iceman delivered a huge block of ice through this door to our icebox. Most people had milk and eggs delivered to the back door also. Except for delivery trucks, the alleys were relatively quiet and we kids often played or rode our bikes there.

### Entertainment

I grew up before the age of television. How did we manage? We did a lot more reading. Family entertainment might be going out for a ride or visiting family and friends. We listened to records—the record shops had listening booths so you could listen to records before deciding which one to buy. We played cards and “board games” like Monopoly and Parchesi. We also used our imaginations more—my friends and I used to act out our own plays, making them up as we went along.

It was the “golden age of radio.” Sunday evenings featured comedians like Jack Benny, Fred Allen, Great Gildersleeve, and Charlie McCarthy. I also enjoyed mysteries like *The Shadow* and westerns like Tom Mix and the Lone Ranger. The sound effects were so realistic you could “see” what was happening as if you were there.

There were two movie theaters within walking distance and several more a short bus or trolley ride away. Just about every Saturday afternoon I'd go to the movies with friends—a double feature, newsreel, and cartoons cost only 12¢.

When the first of my friends got a television set, she invited a bunch of us over to watch the Ed Sullivan show. We all got dressed up for this special occasion! In our family the Weisses were the first to get a TV set. Aunt Sadie had a “gentleman friend” at that time and when Uncle Nate turned the TV on, this man was incredulous. He walked over to look behind the television (can't imagine what he expected to find there).

### Appliances

Like most households then, we had only one phone. We had a private line but some of my friends had a party line, which meant several families shared a single line. Even with a private line, there was no such thing as a private conversation as the phone was in the hallway just off the kitchen and dining room! At first, the phone had a coin box—you put in a nickel and the operator said, “Number please.” Once a month a man came to empty the coin box. I liked to watch him quickly count up the nickels. Later the company switched to a monthly billing system, but it was years before dial phones—the precursor of number pads—replaced live operators.

We had a washing machine in the basement, but it was nothing like today's automatic ones. It had a tub with an agitator—you filled it by connecting a hose to the sink and emptied it by unscrewing a plug on the bottom. You squeezed the water out of the laundry by feeding each

piece through a pair of rollers, paying close attention not to get your fingers caught in the rollers while you untangled one item from another. Clothes were hung to dry on clotheslines.

There were no electric typewriters, computers, copy machines, microwave ovens, videos, or self-adjusting cameras. I remember being excited about many little advances we now take for granted, like windshield washers and side-view mirrors on the car. We didn't have a big choice of fresh fruits and vegetables year 'round, and frozen foods were just beginning to give some alternatives to canned foods.

Air conditioning was yet to be developed. On the hottest nights, Dad took us for a ride to the lakefront or to the forest preserves to cool off. Movie theaters were among the first buildings to be air-conditioned. Then, going to the movies was a double treat.

When I was nine or ten, Dad bought a reversible industrial fan—about 36" and very powerful. It made a tremendous difference on hot nights. When our parents went out, Bob liked to stand in front of the fan and put it on intake, swearing me to secrecy. When my Dad moved to an air-conditioned apartment in 1957, he gave the fan to Uncle Nate. When the Weisses moved to California, they shipped the fan to us in Arlington, Mass. Yes, that's the fan that shredded Alan's violin bow in Schenectady!

## **Shopping**

Before supermarkets, people shopped at small specialty shops—the grocer, the fruit store, the fish store, and the butcher shop (with sawdust on the floor and live chickens in boxes out front). Each storekeeper knew us by name and knew what Mom usually bought. Going shopping with Mom meant walking five or six blocks each way and carrying some of the groceries home. If one of us was sick and she couldn't go out, she'd call in her order and a delivery boy delivered our groceries to us, riding a bike with a big basket mounted over its small front wheel.

When the first supermarket opened in our neighborhood, Mom and I went together like sightseers! We were amazed at the aisles of food choices... and at the electric-eye door openers! Watching people approach the automatic doors for the first time was fun for months. We didn't realize that the A&P was the harbinger of change.

Before World War II, very few people owned their own homes. VA and Fannie Mae mortgages changed that. Another big difference was that we lived in a cash economy—there were no universal credit cards like Visa, no easy credit. If you didn't have an account at a particular store, you either paid cash or wrote a check. I remember being awakened in the middle of the night when a neighbor needed cash to buy an airplane ticket after a death in the family. Airplanes were not the common mode of transportation as they are today. I took my first plane trip when I was 18.

## **Opportunities for Women**

Very few women knew how to drive. I can't remember any families with more than one car. Most people used public transportation. I went all over the city by bus and had much more freedom than most kids today. During the summer my friends and I took the bus to Wrigley Field for Cub games (Sox park was in a very bad neighborhood). Bleacher seats were only fifty cents

—even less on Lady’s Day. In the summer, I also enjoyed going with friends to the North Avenue Beach; we went by bus.

I think one of the biggest changes over the years has been how girls and women are treated. Jewish boys went to Hebrew School, most Jewish girls usually did not (the Bat Mitzvah hadn’t been invented yet!). Starting at an early age, most girls expected to become housewives and mothers, not career women. The newspapers even had separate employment ads for men and women. In the women’s columns, most ads were for clerk, secretary, or “girl Friday.”

Up through the fifties, many more boys than girls went to college. Girls who did were channeled into teaching, nursing, library science, and social work. My mother kept telling me, for example, that going into advertising was “not a good choice for a nice Jewish girl.” Recently, I remarked to a young woman how nice it was to see women in symphony orchestras. She looked puzzled. “Haven’t they always been there?” Not until the 1990s they haven’t.

Women now assume they will have equal opportunity. But we didn’t always. When I was in college, girls lived under strict curfew. On weekdays dorm and sorority doors were locked at 10:00 p.m., midnight on weekends. Of course, there were some exceptions. One of the seniors in my sorority was Editor-in-Chief of the *Daily Illini*. She wouldn’t have had that experience unless her parents gave permission to stay out all night.

In eighth grade we had to write an autobiography. I wrote that I was “interested in teaching, journalism, and housewifery but it was too early to decide what I was best suited for.” In conclusion I wrote: “Maybe fifty years from now when I’m old, gray, and famous, I’ll try to finish this.”

I had long forgotten this early prediction, which I discovered while gathering materials for this memoir. Fifty years later I can state that I have worked at teaching, writing, and “housewifery” and despite my graying hair, I don’t think of myself as old and I definitely am not famous.

### **Some Things Don’t Change**

Girls still play jacks and jump rope and chant handclapping games like “My mother, your mother live across the way.” Despite all the electronic gadgetry, kids still color with crayons and play hide and seek. Most kids still like hotdogs and french fries. Despite all the Internet shopping, shopping at specialty stores and discount stores is still most common. And, “no ballplaying in the house” is still a Kravitz rule, as Nadav clearly stated in June 2000 when he projected to a future time when he’d be the father.

## PART IV - SCHOOL DAYS

### Grammar School

I went to Robert Emmet elementary school, which was just two blocks from our apartment house. When I was in first grade, the teacher asked Mom to come to school to help decide which hand I should learn to write with, since I sometimes wrote with my left and sometimes with my right hand, often reversing letters. After watching me write on the chalkboard with one hand and then the other, they decided that I was slightly more adept with my left hand. The teacher thought that I favored my left hand because I was copying Bob, and she was probably right. Aside from writing —Mom called my handwriting “chicken-scratching” — I eat with my left hand but I use my right hand with scissors, iron, golf club, and bowling ball. But my fate was sealed: I became a lefty in a right-handed world.



**First Grade**



**Fourth Grade**



**Fifth Grade**



**Eighth Grade**

My first grade my class was split—about 12 of the kids were, like me, just entering first grade at midyear, and close to twice that many were half a year ahead. The teacher gave one group “seat work” while she taught the other group. I must have listened in to the more advanced group because instead of getting a promotion to “high first,” I was skipped to second grade.

My favorite second-grade activity was one the teacher called “individualized reading.” We read to ourselves from her file of short stories at our own pace and filled out answer sheets. I read so fast I was able to grade my classmates’ papers as well as doing my own work. A few years later I skipped again, putting me a full year ahead by the time I graduated.

When report cards came out, many of my friends got a quarter from their parents for every E (for excellent—the top mark). This seemed like easy money. I asked Dad to do the same, but he said he expected me to do my best without any monetary rewards. (I still have all my report cards!)



### **Activities Outside of School**

In fifth grade I became a mini-celebrity. The teachers chose me to be on our school's team on a popular Chicago-based radio quiz program. Our team won an AM/FM radio for our school and team-members each got a commemorative medal and a pen set. After I skipped from fifth to sixth grade I was invited to join a club of sixth grade girls. For initiation, the two new members had to scrub the sidewalk in front of our community's only supermarket with a toothbrush, a scene duly recorded by a photographer from a local newspaper. Every year our club entertained our mothers with a luncheon. For these events I usually played the piano while my friend Joanne danced.

Joanne took ballet lessons and was very graceful. One year some enterprising women offered tap dance lessons after school and Mom agreed that I could go, hoping the classes would make me more graceful. I'll never forget my mother's unmistakable laugh as I performed in the big show doing shuffle step, ball change, etc., without much grace and occasionally on the wrong foot.

I now realize that Emmet School was very modern in many respects. Grades four to eight had a student council, with elected representatives from each room. As an eighth grader I helped produce a school newspaper, typing most of it myself on Dad's manual typewriter.

I was selected to play the piano at my grade school graduation and later at my Sunday School Confirmation. My mother was very proud of this. Although I auditioned with "The Minute Waltz" by Chopin, my piano teacher was horrified when I told her that I had actually tried to play it in one minute. For graduation, she wanted me to learn another piece—"Polish Dance" by Scharwenka. I wasn't too keen on her choice since it was not well-known at all. But I did as I was told. The graduation might have been the first time Dad heard me perform—he never went to the annual recitals at my teacher's home.

### **High School**

My next stop was Austin High School. With over 4,500 students, Austin was the largest high school in the city. Following Bob's example, I took journalism and joined the staff of the Austin Times. The basic proofreading and editing skills I learned there enabled me to get my first editorial job at ASHA in 1974.

I moved up from cub reporter to reporter, to features editor and then Co-Editor-in-Chief with my best friend Joanne Goldblatt. It was the first time girls headed our biweekly newspaper. Girls had never been chosen before, either because the editors need to stay at the printers for several hours where they'd hear the printers' crude talk, or because the editors didn't come home until late. But we broke the barrier!



Quizdown contestants of Emmett School (l. to r. front) Linda Rosenberg, 9, Zelda Iesen, 9, Phyllis Zaiken, 10, Marjorie Helman, 11, (l. to r. rear) Jerry Heckman, 11, Charles Stepkin, 8, Murray Simpson, 10, Martin Jacobson, 10, and Stanley Rowland, 11, take it easy in making ready for Kilmer School on Saturday's Quizdown program. (SUN and TIMES Photo)

## Quizdown team for Emmett

Lined up for the defense of Emmett School in their meet with the Quizdown team from Kilmer School in Saturday's contest are:

Zelda Eisen and Linda Rosenberg, 9, and alternate Charles Stepkin, 8, 4th graders; Murray Simpson, Phyllis Zaiken and Martin Jacobson, 5th graders, all 10. From the 6th grade will be 11-year-olds Marjorie Helman, Jerry Kecktmann and alternate Stanley Rowland.

The program, which is aired over WJJD from 10:30 to 11:00 a.m., originates from the Tower Ballroom of the Stevens Hotel, and is jointly sponsored by The SUN and TIMES and radio station WJJD.

Special guest on this Saturday's broadcast will be Hal Hopper, one of three male members of the famous Pied Pipers vocal group, currently appearing on the stage of the Oriental Theater. As special guest, Hopper will be interviewed at half time on the broadcast, and will discuss the history and activities of the group with Mark Russell, WJJD's program director.

An Armstrong Zenith super-heterodyne radio with both AM and FM broadcast bands is awarded to the school of the winning team, while the runner-up is allowed a choice between a Rand McNally Cosmopolitan Map of the World and a large American flag.

Our high school had a swimming pool and everyone was required to take swimming at least once. In order to graduate you had to jump off the diving board and swim to the shallow end. I hated every aspect of the swimming requirement. The locker rooms offered no privacy. All girls had to wear the school's unlined tank suits--they fit poorly and reeked of chlorine. You never got the same suit twice. And the suits were made of material similar to undershirts, with no shaping, designed for girls with no breasts.

For the first three years I managed to avoid swimming with the help of a family friend, Dr. Zakon, a dermatologist. He wrote a note asking that I be excused from swimming because I had athlete's foot. I knew how to swim, but jumping in was another matter entirely. My last semester in high school I finally took swimming and passed everything but the jump. I was afraid to jump in. The teacher insisted. She even showed me the pole she'd use to fish me out of the water if I didn't bob up. She also pointed out what a pity it would be if the valedictorian failed to graduate. Somehow I gathered up my courage and forced myself to jump in—something I didn't do again until I was 61!

Joanne's sister told us that we could satisfy most college language requirements by taking four years of a foreign language in high school. That sounded good so we both took Spanish for four years. It was easy for me and I enjoyed it. One year our Spanish teacher set up a social with the Spanish teacher at an all-boy school. We were supposed to speak only in Spanish! Sure.

I had difficulty with algebra and asked Dad to help me. He used logic to figure out my homework answers. Even though I'd get the answers right, I'd get points off because I'd used the "wrong" method. He didn't think that made any sense, since "we" got the answers right.

## **Marge Helman Tops Graduating Class; Goldstein, Pontikes Trail Close Behind**

DESPITE THE FACT that there are six boys in the top ten of the graduating class of January, 1954, a girl is on top of them all. Marjorie Ruth Helman has retained her position as valedictorian with an average of 3.9774. Margie is President of the National Honor Society, Co-Editor in Chief of the Austin TIMES, and

In the last year of his life, he confessed that he had never studied algebra or geometry in school. After a few semesters with all A's, I became very grade-conscious. And after Bob got a warning notice in chemistry, I avoided all unrequired math and science courses



High School Graduation

Following both my parents' example, I took typing and shorthand as well as college prep courses. Years of piano lessons helped me become a good typist with little effort. In the typing classroom, we learned on typewriters with no letters on the keyboard--there was a letter chart on the wall. As we were starting out, we typed to the rhythm our teacher beat with a ruler.

Once when I was working at Mt Sinai and couldn't decipher my shorthand notes, Dad was able to help me since he'd taken shorthand in high school too and remembered after all those years.



I graduated high school with a near 4.0 average as valedictorian of my class of close to 300 students. I was also president of the National Honor Society and co-Editor-in-Chief of the Austin Times. I tried out and was chosen to speak at my high school graduation. I spoke about the responsibility of citizenship. As one of Chicago's "outstanding seniors," (newspaper label) I participated in Junior Officials Day, a program in which students were made nominal heads of city government for a day. My picture was in all the daily papers. My assignment was the Chicago Housing Authority, but all I remember of that day is a luncheon and bus tour.

## University of Illinois

Some of my BBG friends were going East to school and I thought it would be neat to go to Brandeis. Mom had been a member of Brandeis Women before the school even opened. Brandeis was just starting in 1954, and, since the dorms hadn't been completed yet, women lived in boarding houses. Always protective, Mom refused to let me live in a boarding house. Besides, she said Brandeis was too expensive.

### Opinions of Seniors

## Active Citizenship Top Job for '54 Graduate

Today's graduate has the same problems facing him as those of other generations. Yesterday's problems have faded away and new difficulties seemingly more terrifying have taken their place.

Top ranking graduating seniors from Austin, St. Philip, Marshall and St. Mel High schools were asked what they thought were their greatest responsibilities and opportunities and how they could be applied to advancing themselves and their country. This is what they said:

"Each graduate should learn to be responsible for his own country and take an active interest in the responsibilities and activities of citizenship," observed Margie Helman, 5461 Washington, valedictorian of her class at Austin.

"They say that juvenile delinquency is increasing," she continued. "I can't see the cause. There are more facilities for

3647 Fifth, valedictorian of her class at Marshall.

"Our responsibility to ourselves and others is our first task. We shouldn't let things happen to us but make them happen for us. We'll also find that our greatest reward will come from helping people. I intend to help as many people as I can by becoming a teacher, for

### 'Honorary' Scholar



Robert D. Gregg, retiring principal of Austin High school, receives pin from Margie Helman, 5461 Washington, president of the school's National Honor society, making him an honorary member of Austin's chapter. The presentation was made during ceremonies at the school Thursday. (Staff Photo)

On top of tuition, there was the cost of going back and forth for vacations. I wouldn't be able to keep up with my college friends' lifestyles or even come home for the holidays. Plus... "If you go East to school you'll meet some boy from New York and we'll never see you." How about that for irony! I got over my disappointment quickly and I felt lucky to be going away to school at all. Most of my friends did not go away from home for college.

I had already seen the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana on visits to Bob and it looked good to me. The campus was large with grassy quadrangles criss-crossed by paths. Most undergraduate students lived in student dormitories. I assumed I'd go into a Jewish sorority, since Bob went into a Jewish fraternity. I was thrilled to finally be on my own for the first time.

My first week at Illinois I breezed through two proficiency exams and earned five college credits for required courses in rhetoric and health. This gave me a false sense of confidence and I thought I could take my first midterm exams without much preparation. I was wrong! I got mostly C's. I wasn't satisfied with C's, so I buckled down and worked for A's. Still I wasn't a total grind. I went to beer parties and mastered the art of "chug-a-lug." I joined "Block I," the flip-card section of the football stands.

I enrolled in a pre-journalism curriculum and joined the staff of the *Daily Illini*. My first beat was the university's Institute of Labor and Industrial Relations. The staff there was thrilled

to have the Institute written up in the *Daily Illini* for the first time. I stayed on the staff for several semesters, but lost interest when I didn't advance to more exciting beats or responsibility.

Many years later, when we were living in Schenectady, my Dad told me that the *Daily Illini* had wanted to promote me but couldn't do so without my parents' permission. In those days, girls lived with curfews. We couldn't stay out after 10:00p.m. on weeknights and midnight on weekends, without parent permission in advance. Mom didn't like the idea of me being out unprotected all night, so they didn't sign (and I didn't advance). All those years later Dad wanted me to know that he still felt bad about holding me back. I never even knew about my missed opportunity and at that point, it didn't matter.

After I completed the required number of credits in liberal arts, I started taking courses in my major. Everyone in the curriculum had to take a course in setting type by hand – using boxes of loose type – to make sure we understood that there was no such thing as “squeezing” something in, since the type was then made of metal. In a course on advertising, I wrote ad copy for a new kind of lawnmower, a hybrid of reel and rotary. In a course in expository writing, most of the people were well into their majors and wrote scholarly articles about their fields. I was still taking general courses, so I wrote papers about myself. My instructor gave me an A and wrote on my final paper, “After reading about your diets, astigmatism, and left-handedness, I'm beginning to think you're the most unfortunate student around – but I know better.”

Since I'd enjoyed learning Spanish in high school, I decided to take French in college, even though I didn't need any more language credits. One semester convinced both me and my instructor that I could never pronounce French properly. Rather than throw four credits away, I arranged to study the second semester's work over the summer on my own and take the final exam with his summer school students.

Going down by train alone and staying overnight at the student union made me feel quite grown up. I took the exam and left a postcard for my grade with the instructor. On it he wrote that I got an A on the exam. He also wrote that I made a wise decision not to pursue French! This brought my free credit hours to nine.

U of I was huge even then—I'm not sure how big but there were at least 25,000 students. Entering as a midterm student I had to live in a dorm for the first semester. Joanne, my best friend from Austin, also went to U of I but we'd agreed not to room together. We were both ready for new friends and spent first semester in different dorms. I was assigned a roommate who was more affluent and sophisticated than me but we got along so well we agreed to pledge the same sorority. We were both invited to join SDT (the more sophisticated crowd, mostly from Chicago's north side and suburbs) but she wasn't asked to join AEPhi (mostly small-town girls who were much more down-to-earth). After much soul-searching and a very long and teary long-distance talk with Bob, I pledged AEPhi (and was surprised to find myself a sorority sister to my old friend Joanne).

As part of initiation week, I was charged with setting up a volunteer project. True to my roots, I contacted the nearest nursing home and asked how we could help. The administrator asked us to make tray decorations for the residents' dinner.



I made class and university honors every semester and was named to the Freshman, Sophomore, and Journalism Honorary Societies. These designations were not a surprise, since I was getting mostly A's and the honors themselves didn't seem any "big deal" to me - in fact I never attended Honors Day.



Some AEPi activities –  
doing a skit with Lois  
Block, and...



Performing on Homecoming  
Float

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

By excellence in scholarship

*Margaret Ruth Nelson*

has achieved the distinction of membership in the group of students to whom recognition will be given at the Thirty-second Annual Honors Day Convocation to be held in the University Auditorium, Friday afternoon, May 4, 1956, at one-fifteen o'clock.

The families and friends of the honor students are invited to attend. University Radio Station W I L L (580 kilocycles) will broadcast the program.

Cordially,

LESLIE A. BRYAN

*Secretary of the Senate*

**Official notice of one of my honors**

Several memories from those days: One semester I had two or three finals the same day. I wanted to prepare carefully for all and did something many of my friends did before every final - I stayed up all night studying. My head was full of information and I felt I did quite well on the first exam. When I came to the second (or was it the third?), my hand just couldn't keep writing. I wanted to keep up the speed and give well-thought-out answers (my exams were all essay questions), but it was a real struggle to keep the pen moving across the page. I don't remember how I did on the second exam, but I do recall promising myself never to study all night again.

Another memory, along an entirely different vein, resulted from my dating a "local" boy. I can't forget what a revelation it was when he took me to a Saturday night dance in a rural community. People of all ages were having a great time square dancing together. There was such warmth and spirit. What a wholesome way to have fun! I was surprised to see the "old folks" keep dancing after I didn't have the breath or legs to continue.

### Meeting My B'shert

Strange as it seems - must be fate! - being an AEPi is what created the opportunity for me to meet Larry. He came to the University on Air Force business with Jay Hirshfield, whose mother had a friend living in Champaign with a daughter in AEPi. Before leaving Dayton to inspect the U of I engineering labs, Jay called Cookie Cohn's mother to set up dates for himself and Larry. Cookie, who had just become engaged, asked me if I wanted to go on a blind date. She said there were two visitors, one short, the other tall.



**My B'shert**  
**Larry Kravitz 1956**

I picked the taller guy, Larry Kravitz. Irma Sheinwald (several inches shorter), of St. Louis, got Jay. They took us to dinner and dancing at the Chanute Field Officers' Club in nearby Rantoul, Illinois—a glamorous evening for two college girls. We were comfortable with each other right away and had a great time. Irma suggested that we invite our dates to Sunday brunch at the sorority (a first for me). Larry promised to stay in touch with me when we said goodbye... and he did. (More about our courtship and marriage in the next section.) Later that year I introduced Jay to my friend Sybil and they dated for a while. I stayed at her grandmother's house several times in Dayton after Larry and I got engaged.

### **University of Chicago**

Before I went on the fateful date, I had already decided to leave the University of Illinois. In addition to wanting a more intellectual environment, I thought I'd run out of interesting Jewish guys to date. I discussed this with Mom, with the idea of transferring to Brandeis. This was still ruled out, but she suggested the University of Chicago, a place Bob referred to as the "dirty ankle crowd," since it had a rather Bohemian reputation. With my good grades, I thought I could get a scholarship, but Dad said it wasn't right since he could afford to send me. I submitted the forms anyway and Chicago accepted me and awarded me an honorary scholarship—scholarship recognition with no stipend.

At Illinois I had been in a pre-journalism curriculum. I wanted to write advertising back then! Every time I went home, Mom would point out that teaching was a wonderful profession for a woman raising a family—short days, summers off, and almost certain steady employment. Since U of C didn't have a journalism school, I succumbed to Mom's "brainwashing" and registered for a degree in education.

The U of C made a number of concessions to make sure I wouldn't lose any time by transferring. They gave me credit for the courses I'd placed out of by exam at Illinois and, amazingly enough, allowed me to take an exam to meet the math requirement. To cram for the math placement exam I bought a book *Mathematics for the Millions*, which had far more math than I needed. I gave it to Dad after the exam and he thought it was a great book. I studied hard and memorized things I didn't understand, like the sideways 8 (which I later learned was the symbol for infinity). And, miracle of miracles, I passed!

Then, just before I was to start classes at Chicago, Mom died. This was a devastating experience, as I mentioned in the previous section.

During my last semester at the U of I, my parents moved from Austin, the community I'd grown up in, as the neighborhood was changing for the worse. My mother always liked the south side so they moved to South Shore. It was strange coming home to an unfamiliar neighborhood, but our new apartment had several advantages: two bathrooms, an easy walk to the beach, and an easy commute to U of C.

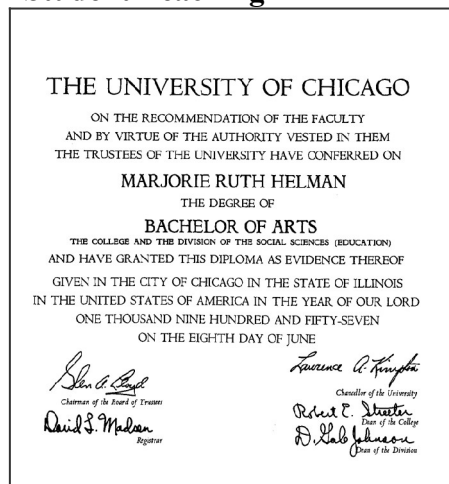


Since Dad knew Rabbi Ralph Simon<sup>4</sup> from UJA activities, he joined Rodfei Zedek, a large Conservative congregation with many prominent members, but a good 10-minute drive from our house. There was a small Conservative *shul* just one block from us on Phillips Avenue but Dad wanted Rodfei Zedek. It felt strange driving to services on the High Holidays.

In retrospect, it was fortuitous that I decided to move back home and was already enrolled in the U of C. Living at home, I could take on the household responsibilities that were suddenly thrust upon me. Between living off-campus, my household duties, and being engaged, I didn't make many friends at the University of Chicago. But I enjoyed the more academic atmosphere of the U of C. I had never met undergraduates so interested in their classes that lunch conversations picked up where the lecturer left off. People talked about books and ideas... at Illinois they talked about football games and social activities.

One day, my social science instructor told me he was going to nominate me for a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship. I said it was impossible because I was getting married and moving to Dayton. Bob, and then Dad and Larry, encouraged me to apply for the fellowship. I submitted my application. I didn't win, but it was nice to know that a scholarly place like the U of C chose me to be its candidate.

## Student Teaching



Most students did their student teaching at the U of C Lab School. I observed several first-grade teachers at work and picked the one I wanted as my mentor. Since I didn't know where I'd be living after I got married, I signed up for the maximum number of student teaching hours, to make sure I'd qualify for a teacher's license wherever we lived.

I loved working at the Lab School. I was asked to develop a social studies unit and I had the kids learn about the post office by making one and using it. We hammered wood together with nails and built a structure in the classroom. Our post office was finished in time to deliver valentines.

The kids were great. One of my students was the son of Daniel Boorstein (noted historian and later Librarian of Congress). Another child with a white mother and a black father liked to draw pictures of the maid taking her to school. She colored the maid brown and herself pink. I was invited to students' homes for dinner. One boy made a ceramic ashtray and gave it to me as a present. Teaching was fun with these kids. But, as I soon found out, teaching at the Lab School was not good preparation for teaching in the Dayton public schools.

I graduated from the University of Chicago with honors on June 8, 1957, but I wasn't there. I was in synagogue for Larry's *Auf-ruf*.

<sup>4</sup>. The father of Rabbi Matthew Simon, who became rabbi at B'nai Israel the same year we moved to Rockville.

## **PART V – NEW BEGINNINGS**

### **Long Distance Courtship**

The week after I moved back home to Chicago, Larry started writing and calling me. He asked if he could come and visit. Naturally I was thrilled. My parents were very impressed that he wanted to drive all the way from Dayton just to see me!

I told Mom and Dad that Larry was very special and when they met him they liked him right away too. He seemed so mature compared to my other dates. Among other things, he told how he had car trouble along the way and fixed the problem himself! I think Mom was as pleased as I was when he wrote asking if he could come again. We set up another visit but I had to cancel when my mother died. I can't describe my feelings of grief and shock.

Those letters kept coming and soon we were writing several times a week. Larry came again a few weeks later and we enjoyed each other's company more and more. On one of his visits, I took him to the Museum of Science and Industry. I knew he'd enjoy it as it's always been one of my favorite Chicago sites. But this was a real learning experience for me. Larry was attracted to all the demonstrations of mechanical and physical principles. And he enjoyed explaining these heretofore unexplored portions to me.

On the third visit he took me completely by surprise by saying I had all the attributes he wanted in a wife – how's that for a proposal! It seemed way too soon. Certainly I'd always pictured this point in my life to be more romantic... but the chemistry was right and we seemed like a good match so I agreed to "sleep on it."

By now we were writing every day. When he came back two or three weeks later I was ready to accept. Always practical, I said it was foolish to spend everything he had on a diamond ring, he should save it for our future. But at the end of June he surprised me with a diamond ring – said it didn't seem right not to. That's when I insisted that he formally "ask Dad's permission." Naturally Dad was pleased to have some good news after our devastating loss. And he urged Larry to extend his stay until Sunday evening so he could meet the family.

### **Now It's Official**

Purely by coincidence, Aunt Rose and Uncle Nate were having a party that Sunday in honor of JoAnn's graduation from grade school. As soon as we walked in and broke the news, Uncle Nate called Aunt Nettie in California to share the excitement. When I got on the phone she made her much-quoted comment: "Tell me everything, but remember it's long distance." (Long distance phone calls were nowhere near as common or inexpensive as they are now.)

Esther and Shelly Moss were at the party and Shel noticed that I had wrapped my ring in tape to keep it from falling off. At that time he was working for a jewelry shop. He told me to come to his store and he'd have the ring made smaller while I waited. I knew the store was on south State Street but I wasn't sure exactly where. He smiled and said, "Just walk by and I'll hook you in." And that is exactly what he did. Shel was a flashy dresser as well as a smooth talker and the mostly black clientele of this store just gravitated to him. His job was to stand in the door and "hook" anyone who showed any sign of interest.

I called my Aunt Anne, who had moved back to Chicago, to tell her the good news. She asked “When does your young man come to visit,” and I told her every second or third weekend. She said she was eager to meet him and wanted us to come to dinner “some Wednesday night”!<sup>1</sup>



**My engagement photo - 1956**

Shortly after we became engaged, we were invited to my friend Cookie Cohn’s wedding in Champaign – she was the one who had set up our blind date. In his haste to drive to Chicago, Larry left his suit and dress shoes back in Dayton. We spent the whole day downtown going from store to store – my first experience trying to find size 13 shoes. Amazingly enough, Larry finally found shoes that fit and a suit at Sears Roebuck. In putting together his outfit I pointed out that the white wool sox he favored (to Bob’s horror) were not really appropriate with dress shoes.

Soon we set the date and started making wedding plans. My mother’s oldest friend Martha Bloom said she’d like to help and we became quite close. She insisted that I stop calling her “Mrs. Bloom” and start calling her “Martha.” Martha had three sons and missed having a daughter. She was also a link with the mother I’d just lost... we filled each other’s needs perfectly. We went shopping together and talked about everything. She couldn’t believe my father had put my name on his checking account and charge accounts.

I asked my friends Joanne Goldblatt, whom I had known since childhood, June Krause, and Sybil Stern, sorority sisters from Illinois, to be in the bridal party. I encouraged them to pick dresses they’d wear again, but they picked typical bridesmaid dresses. For my dress, I accepted the offer of my former roommate Lois Block to get married in her dress.

All the details were falling into place. I had reserved the synagogue, looked at home furnishings, hired the florist and photographer. All of this... and I hadn’t met Larry’s family! I was eager to go to New York but he kept putting it off because his mother was not well. I was shocked to learn that his brother Joe had had their mother committed to Bellevue Hospital.

### **My First Trip To New York**

Finally, I arranged to visit New York in October. My Dad took me to the airport and Uncle Nate surprised me by meeting me there with a box of candy to give to Larry’s sister. I flew to New York alone – a first for me (and my second plane trip). Larry picked me up from the airport and told me not to give the candy Uncle Nate had so thoughtfully provided to the Ostrinskys – it didn’t have an O-U. My education was beginning! To add to the confusion, he suggested that I give it instead to the Spielmans.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> ? . Anne remarried after her first husband Eli died, and my cousin Judy spent a few nights with us while her mother was on her honeymoon. Judy, several years younger than me, was engaged to marry Paul Weiss, a student I knew at the U of C. I had seen Paul’s 1-room basement living quarters--not even an apartment--and couldn’t imagine the two of them living there. I noted that Larry and I were waiting until I finished school and her comeback was, “You have a home to live in.” Judy was married in her mother’s modest apartment, wearing the grand wedding gown her sister Natalie wore at a wedding before 500 guests. There were less than 25 of us present and the contrast made the wedding sort of depressing. They had 3 kids and later divorced.

When we arrived at the Ostrinskys, I met Martha and Bertha and their families and Bernie. Knowing their age was one thing, seeing my future sisters- and brothers-in-law was still a jolt – they looked like my parents’ generation! They tried to make me feel welcome but it was very awkward, especially since Larry had told me that when he left the house they were still discussing whether I should call my future brother-in-law Meir or Rabbi (I wasn’t accustomed to using first names with people their age so it wasn’t easy for me either.)

Larry had told them that I played the piano and they insisted that I perform that first afternoon. I’m not sure how Meir managed this, but I soon found myself alone with him so he could ask me about my family and Jewish background. We discovered that he went to *yeshiva* with the rabbi of the synagogue I grew up in. He could hardly believe it when I told him that his former classmate worked for a congregation with mixed seating! Then he started quizzing me to see how much I knew. Among other things he asked, “What is the First Commandment?” I thought I knew. I was wrong. The right answer was, Be fruitful and multiply. (How embarrassing!)

While I was at the Ostrinskys, I helped Meir put up their *succah* – he wore gloves to protect his hands, and I got a splinter. I stayed with the kids when Martha and Larry went to the hospital to visit their mother. Renah and Zvi mostly kept to themselves but we did make *succah* decorations together. *Succot* was very late that year but the cold nasty weather of late October did not keep us from eating in the *succah*. Martha *shlepped* hot food out to the *succah* but by the time we ate the first bite it was cold.

Since this was my first trip to New York, Martha said she was sorry I hadn’t had time to do any sightseeing. She proposed taking me to Coney Island. This surprised me but it sounded like fun. I had no idea we’d walk there – quite a trek – to watch people eat and go on rides. By the time we walked back I was starved and exhausted. We walked in and Meir told me to call my father right away. Martha suggested that I “wait ’til after *Shabbos*.” But Meir said that when the phone rang every twenty minutes he decided it must be an emergency so he answered it. And, reminding us all of the commandment to honor one’s parents, he told me to call my father immediately.

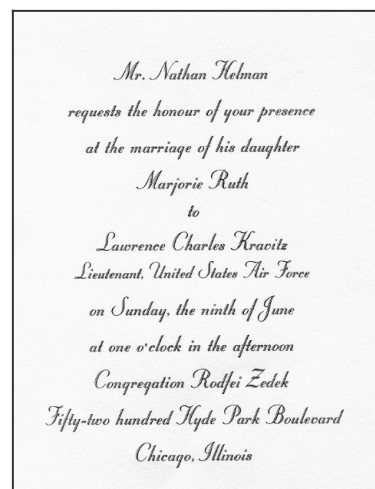
One evening we went to visit Joe and Betty. They had invited some friends over and I was impressed by their repeated references to the “new school.” I later learned they were referring to the New School for Social Science Research, an institution in which none of them were teachers or students.

I’d hoped to see the standard tourist sights but between *Shabbos* and *Yom Tov* there wasn’t time. The only place we went sight-seeing was the UN. This gave Larry the opportunity of showing me the New York City subway at rush hour. The throngs of glum people crowding onto trains was bad enough but seeing an attendant use his knee to shove the last passengers onto the train made an indelible impression. Not my kind of place!

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2. When I presented the candy, Bertha took one look at it and, spotted the missing O-U, said “We won’t show this to the kids.” Several years later we stayed with the Spielmans, and Bertha took me to a Loehman’s in another town on Saturday when she heard I left my dress at home. She normally didn’t drive on *Shabbat* but wanted me to be properly dressed for a theater date in Manhattan with Bob and Janet.

I learned quite a lot that week. I didn't meet my future mother-in-law – she was still in Bellevue – and we wouldn't meet until she came to Chicago two days before the wedding. But I



met everyone else. I was sure I would get along fine with them all as long as we didn't live in New York. Larry asked me to start writing regularly to his mother using my letters to Aunt Nettie as a model. There was no question of – it's your mother, you write. I was becoming part of the family and I did my best to fit in. I continued writing weekly letters to his mother until she died.

During the winter break, I was asked to speak at *Rodfei Zedek's* college night. Someone made a disparaging comment that girls only went to college to find a husband. First I justified the importance of girls getting a college education. Then I went on to say that if we found a husband at the same time, so much the better!

## Learning To Cook

As the months slipped by, I kept expanding my cooking repertoire. One memorable experience was my first try at *gefilte* fish. Martha Bloom told me how my mother made it – but I faltered when I got to the “season to taste” part. Every time I brought the raw fish mixture up to my mouth, my stomach rose too. We added a lot of salt at the table and I didn't make *gefilte* fish again until we moved to Schenectady and Yaffa Lown gave me a recipe that included measured seasoning. Dad used to joke that he ought to charge Larry for the experience I was getting!

At one point that year, Bob asked me to make a dinner party for his friends from law school. Larry was so impressed with my culinary skills, he mentioned the dinner to Martha (the main course was brisket, the dessert was raspberry cheesecake). That's when she sent me the Molly Goldberg cookbook with a note calling my attention to the chapter on *kashrut*.

None of Bob's friends was Jewish. To my amazement they drank all the liquor we had left over from Bob's bar mitzvah (obviously my parents and their friends were not drinkers)... and one tipsy guy was making long-distance phone calls from our phone.

In addition to cooking, I baked many double batches of brownies to send to my two guys in service - Bob, who had been drafted during the year, and Larry.

## The Big Event

Aunt Nettie and Sadie flew to Chicago the week before the wedding to attend the unveiling of the stone for my mother. Since they had missed Mom's funeral, we scheduled the unveiling so they could be there. I was concerned this would be a sad start to the wedding week, but Dad convinced me it was the right thing to do. Their flight was set to arrive at about the time I should have been finishing one of the U of C's famous comprehensive exams. I gambled that I'd finish the all day exam in time to meet their afternoon flight. I actually finished so early I called Aunt Rose and drove to Austin to get her so she could meet them at the airport too.

## Certificate of Marriage

.....Lawrence S. Kravitz.....

and

.....Marjorie R. Helman.....

were

United in Marriage

at...Chicago.....

in...Illinois.....on the

...tenth.....day of.....Sivan..... 5717.

Anno Mundi, corresponding to the

...ninth.....day of.....June..... 1957

in accordance with the rites and the usages of Israel  
and in conformity with the laws of the State of

...Illinois.....

.....Ralph Simon.....RABBI

WITNESSES

.....Maurice Jacobson.....  
.....Benjamin Jacobson.....

The next to arrive for the wedding was Si Spielman. He came a few days early on a business trip. He brought his ham radio and transmitted from my Dad's 22nd floor apartment! My brother was fascinated.

I finally met "Mama" when she came for Friday night dinner two days before the wedding. She presented me with two gifts: A white Bible from her sisterhood and a set of silver-plate flatware. I would never have picked the pattern in a million years but Larry had forewarned me – she had given the set to Joe and Betty and they had rejected it. I prepared and served dinner for Mama, Bernie, Si, Larry, my Dad, and Bob – not the typical role for a bride-to-be two days before the wedding.

The wedding festivities started with the *auf-  
rauf* on Saturday at *Rodfei Zedek* – a direct conflict with my graduation from the University of Chicago. To tell the truth, I had never heard of an *auf-rauf*. I wanted to attend my graduation but Dad gave me no choice. I raised the subject with Uncle Dave and he

said the University of Chicago should know better than to have graduation on a Saturday. By the time June 8 came, I forgot all about graduation. In fact, when my mentor from the Lab School called that morning to congratulate me, I thought she was referring to my marriage. After the services, my Aunt Anne made a family luncheon at her home.

Saturday night Nate and Rose and the Gelmans hosted a dinner at the Belden Stratford, the only hotel with kosher facilities. It wasn't until years later that I learned this dinner was usually the responsibility of the groom's family.

Bertha and Si were the only ones of Larry's family to respond to the wedding invitations. I knew Mama and Bernie were coming because Larry was bringing them. Martha decided to come at the last minute and flew in at midnight on Saturday. On Sunday morning, Mama announced that Joe and Betty also made a last-minute decision to come. My Dad was acting as caterer for our wedding dinner (drawing on the talents and economies of Mount Sinai's chef). You can imagine how pleased he was to hear of three unexpected guests, two still en route. All the seating arrangements had been made. The menu included an appetizer of a half pineapple filled with fruit and a main course of prime rib – portions that would be hard to stretch.



**Prenuptial Dinner. Rear: Bertha, Larry's mother (hidden), me, Larry, my Dad, Grandpa, Bob. Front: Del Jones (Larry's friend from KU), Gladys Gelman,**



**My Dad and Uncle Nate**

Meanwhile, in all the excitement, where was the groom? Outside directing traffic! He had seen the mess and confusion and, in typical fashion, was determined to put things right. Someone



*Dad, me Larry, Larry's mom*

hustled him in to change. The wedding party assembled in the hallway but Joe and Betty still hadn't arrived. Dad wanted to start because of the logistics and Rabbi Simon wanted to start because he had to officiate at another wedding that afternoon, but Mama was insisting we wait for Joe. A little tension any one?

Aunt Rose and Rabbi Simon's wife were overseeing the bride's dressing room and they decided I should not wear my glasses! When I took my glasses off to get dressed, they refused to

give them back me and pushed me out the door. Another memory from the wedding dinner – Rabbi Simon announcing that what looked like butter on the table was really *pareve* margarine (it had just come on the market).



**Dad and I enter the chapel**



**Larry and I after the ceremony**



**We are bombarded with rice.  
Look what they did to our car**

Soon the festivities were over and Larry and I made our getaway. We spent a week in Dayton before heading west – the first of many trips taking advantage of his job-related travels. He had a meeting to attend in Berkeley. Since I had never been west of Chicago this sounded great.

### **Heading West**

Trying to stretch our modest budget, Larry talked me into a camping trip (you can tell he had a lot to learn about his bride). Our first night out was supposed to have been at a lovely lakeside spot but I refused to get out of the car in the pouring rain. We picnicked most meals and slept out some of the time, mostly at national and state parks. I was driving when we crossed the Mississippi, and when I complained that I was too busy driving to appreciate it, Larry drove back so I could have the full experience. I was thrilled to see Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Mt. Rushmore, waving fields of wheat, and other sights I'd only read about. We talked and sang our way across the country and back for about five weeks. As for camping, I liked eating and sleeping outside...but my enthusiasm for "roughing it" did not extend to the shower and toilet facilities. I distinctly recall my insistence that we leave the Grand Canyon earlier than planned so I could "answer the call of nature."

Memories of Nevada: We stayed at a motel that had a sign prominently displayed: "The room rate is the same whether you stay one hour or all night." I was surprised to see slot





**I loved to watch Larry shave outside.**



**If you look closely you can see our tent on the left**



**Admiring the spectacular view in Yosemite**



**Visiting my great-aunts in Los Angeles: Aunt Anna, Aunt Nettie, Aunt Sadie**

machines everywhere, even in the ladies' room. We went to a gambling casino, at first just to watch. Then I wanted to try my luck at the slot machines. Each time I won, bells rang and someone came over to bring a cup of silver dollars. After the third time, the casino representative asked to see my driver's license. He examined it and then told us we'd have to leave because I was under age! Later, when we got back to Chicago, my Dad had asked us to pay the cleaning lady and her eyes nearly popped out when I paid her in silver dollars.

We spent time with Sy Lapporte when we were in Berkeley. We also went to Los Angeles to see my college roommate (whose wedding dress I'd worn) and visit my aunts again. Nettie and Sadie were thoughtful enough to include my father's aunt Anna Loebner in our brief reunion. Aunt Anna told us about buying something and how she "chewed" down the price. Larry was surprised to hear her say "Jewed" down. We'll never know which she meant. That was the last time I saw Aunt Anna; Nettie and Sadie came to visit us in Schenectady eight years later.

## The Newlyweds

Our return trip was planned to coincide with the wedding of Dad and Trudy. On our way into the city we stopped off to see Uncle Dave and Aunt Reva. Reva grinned and said, “Well Margie darling, are you pregnant yet?”

Dad and Trudy were married in a brief ceremony in Rabbi Simon’s study with just Bob, Larry, me, Grandpa, Pat, and Irv, and the Gelmans. Afterwards Trudy had arranged an elegant luncheon in a nearby hotel.



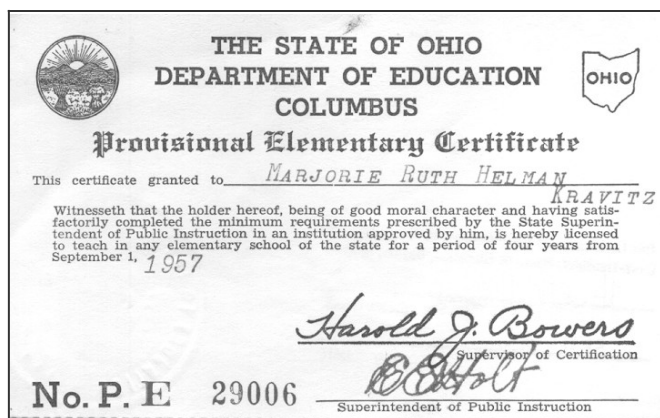
After Dad and Trudy’s wedding: Bob, Pat, Trudy, Dad, me, Larry

Then it was back to Dayton and the real world. I had barely unpacked when Larry invited Howard and Zvi to visit – his sisters had done so much for him he wanted to start reciprocating right away. To this day Eileen Spielman is amazed that I had company immediately after our honeymoon. Among other activities Larry took his nephews to the shooting range (I always wondered if Howard and Zvi told their parents). The boys found fossil rocks, which I think Howard still has!

The first Friday night we made Shabbat in our own apartment, I took extra pains to prepare a festive meal. But before I let Larry taste a bite, I told him to make *kiddush*. He did the minimal “*borei pri ha-gaffen*” and the next week I went to the Conservative synagogue and bought him a *siddur*.

With both of us needing to drive to work, we realized we’d need a second car. Larry picked out a ‘46 Chevvie and worked on it until it ran quite well. When we went out for a drive I remember saying we looked like “Ma and Pa Kettle,” a movie about a hillbilly family. Despite its looks, the car was a good deal. We paid only \$75 and on several cold days when our good car wouldn’t start, the old clunker came through. We sold it the week we left for exactly what we’d paid for it.

Soon it was September and another rude awakening – teaching in a blue-collar neighborhood school was a world away from my Lab School preparation. There were four first grade classes. As the newest teacher, I was given the first graders least likely to succeed. One boy was still not toilet trained! I worked hard getting ready for back-to-school night and was really let down that only one mother came. She told me all her troubles and despaired, “Mrs. Kravitz, I’m at the end of my rope.” I repeated this to Larry and said I couldn’t



My Ohio Teacher's License

imagine any mother talking like that. He reminded me of my reaction to this comment many times during the next decade.

Unlike the Lab School, there were no specialty teachers in this school – I taught gym, music, art, reading, math, everything. And I was pregnant! That semester was a disaster. When I left in January none of my students was reading yet.

By coincidence, a cousin of Irv Menachof was married in Dayton and Larry and I were the only family guests on Pat's side. Later that year we went to Chicago for Pat and Irv's wedding. All I remember is that they were married by an orthodox rabbi who insisted on having his own witnesses for the ceremony. Dressed in black coats and hats they stood together, two anonymous broad backsides, completely blocking our view!

### **Our First Apartment**

This account would not be complete without a few lines about our life on the Air Force base in Dayton. I moved into the apartment on the base that Larry had shared with two friends. When Ed and Hans moved out, they left behind the ugliest used furniture imaginable and a vacuum cleaner with a bag held together by staples! Although Larry and his roommates were officers, they'd rented enlisted quarters to save money. The base was a class society – I got letters addressed to "Mrs. Lt." signed by "Mrs. General" – and we were out of our element.

We lived in a two-story garden apartment. Constructed to save money, these apartments were built with side-by-side staircases and back-to-back bathrooms. The walls were so thin Larry put a tape over the razor-blade slot in the medicine chest to keep our neighbors' used blades from coming into our medicine chest instead of falling into the minuscule space between apartments. I couldn't tell whether someone was walking upstairs in our apartment or the one next door – especially distressful when using the bathroom at the head of the stairs.

To our neighbors, we were a curiosity. My Dad gave me the grand piano I'd grown up with and it filled the entire dining room! The woman next door commented that I got chocolate milk delivered – actually it was skim milk delivered in brown bottles – and told me we had our TV sets in the same place (she hadn't been in the apartment yet so she obviously checked it out through the window).

### **Moving on**

When I realized I was pregnant I called the base hospital but, instead of the private appointment I'd expected, I found a dozen or more women waiting for their first appointment. This was our indoctrination visit. On the wall was a mural showing an Air Force plane with three babies dangling from its nose and propellers beating out a stork carrying just one. The nurse in charge explained the rules: This was the military and we were under orders. If we gained more than two pounds a month, we'd be ordered to the hospital to take it off. When the baby was due, we were to make independent plans for getting to the hospital – our husbands had more important things to do than take us to the hospital. Everything was according to a military regulation – anesthesia, when to get out of bed, visitors, release. This sounded awful to me.

I was grateful when an Air Force budget cut gave Larry the opportunity for an early discharge. He applied to Harvard and MIT, where our friend Jay Hirshfield had enrolled the semester before. When Larry got accepted at MIT we made plans to move to Massachusetts.

### **Our first real home**

Our first real home was a two-family house in Arlington. It was a good choice. Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay more or less adopted us. We had a 6-room apartment – 2 bedrooms, plus a third for Larry’s study, a screened porch, and a back yard. We also had a coal furnace that had to be stoked and a gas-fired hot water tank we had to light half an hour before showering. The shower itself, was something Larry rigged up in the bathtub. When Dad heard we were living in a “cold water flat,” he offered to help us financially but we were too proud to accept.

In that area, the apartments were rented without a refrigerator. We bought a used refrigerator and a used washing machine. The piano made it look like we had more furniture than we actually had – a sofa-bed, two lamps of my parents, and a Danish modern easy chair.

In the months before we arrived, I’d written to the Boston area schools and learned that none of the school systems would hire young married women. After my dismal failure in Dayton I wasn’t too upset... especially since I was sure I could get a job using my secretarial skills. To simplify commuting, I found a job in the mechanical engineering department at MIT. Then Larry got accepted to Harvard and decided to go there. So much for convenience.

When I was interviewed at MIT Professor Bob Mann told me his last two secretaries had quit to have a baby and he hoped I’d stay for a few years at least. Since we needed the money I didn’t say anything. As departmental secretary it was my job to take care of all the paperwork associated with a new hire. I did everything but schedule my pre-employment physical. When I could put it off no more I went for the physical. I was five months pregnant but I pretended to be shocked by the news! “Wait until I tell my husband!” I begged the doctor not to report her findings right away. My boss was too nice to make a fuss but he did ask me to promise I’d work until the end of June (in my embarrassment I’d fudged my due date by a few weeks). At the beginning of June the OB told me to stop taking the bus to work (Larry had a summer job at Lincoln Labs) and my boss had to drive me to and from MIT to finish up the year-end work.

### **Before Alan’s arrival**

Using the *Directory of Medical Specialists* my Dad picked a Boston OB\GYN. Dr. Weiner was amused when I told him how I happened to select him. He also wanted me to keep my weight gain to a minimum. Since his office was in the Back Bay area of Boston, I’d walk across the bridge from work during my lunch hour for appointments. If there were no negative comments about my weight, I’d treat myself to a chocolate milkshake before I headed back to work.

Meanwhile Bob, who had been stationed on Governor’s Island in New York, made one or two visits to the Ostrinskys and the Spielman’s. During that winter Bob came to visit and brought Janet along to meet us. A few months later, he called to announce their engagement and said he wanted to use our mother’s diamond ring. We met them in Sturbridge Village and I

delivered the “family jewel.” Bob teased me about how huge I was, reminding me that Aunt Nettie had been a twin.

At work, one of the grad students commented on my pregnancy and asked, “Do you worry all the time that it will be an idiot?” I decided not to add that to my list of worries.

We went to New York in mid-April to celebrate Passover. The obstetrician agreed to my making the trip on condition that I travel at least half the time lying down (I was 6 months pregnant). One of the things that stands out in my mind was the sight of Larry’s mom sitting in the kitchen making *gefilte* fish from halibut steak – not a freshwater fish, only one kind of fish, no recipe, and no grinder. She sat on a stool talking to me while she chopped it in a wooden bowl.

### **“This is Number 1 and the Fun Has Just Begun”**

My due date was July 10. On July 8 I felt strange. I didn’t think I was in labor but I didn’t feel right either. I called my OB and he told me to take a cab to the office. He said it was too soon to bother my “hubby.” I left Larry a note asking him to bring in the laundry from the lines in the backyard. The cabby took one look at me and drove me to Back Bay in record time. The doctor examined me and gave me a shot. Since he was going to the hospital anyway, he took me there...driving with one hand on the steering wheel and the other on my belly.



**Bringing Alan home  
from the hospital**

The doctor sent me into the labor suite and promised to call Larry. Alan was born the next morning. Except for a brief glimpse of Paul Moss the year before, I hadn’t seen a newborn baby since my cousin Gail was born in 1945. And I had no mother, mother-in-law, or anyone else to help me prepare for childbirth and infant care. I had studied Dr. Spock’s book on infant and child care, but nothing really prepared me for taking care of a new baby. Back then women stayed in the hospital until the *briss* so at least I had time to recover a little before taking on household responsibility.

Based on what my mother had told me, I decided on breastfeeding even though my doctor told me it was primitive and foolish...something they do in Africa! Luckily for me, Beth Israel hospital had two visiting nurses from Belgium who were Jewish – they called Alan “Moshele.” They provided the coaching I needed to succeed. A nursing mother was such a rarity in those days that the floor nurses used to come to my room to watch me.

My Dad had set up his vacation to coincide with the arrival of his first grandchild. He’d contacted the executive director of Beth Israel and arranged for a VIP tour while he was there. The Beth Israel director was surprised Dad just assumed my baby would be born so close to my due date.

Before Alan was born, we had decided to name our baby after Larry's father (Aharon) if it we had a boy and after my mother (Ester Sarah) if we had a girl. Alan's middle name (Benjamin) is for Bayla, Larry's maternal grandmother.

The New York clan was thrilled about the new baby, but none of them came to the *briss*. The only ones present were Larry, my Dad, and Trudy. None of the New York clan made the trip for Saul or Steven's *briss* either. Dad and Trudy were always there, with Dad as *Sandek*, holding his grandson during the ceremony.



Alan at 8 weeks

After the *briss*, Martha called and told me to buy "*nahit*" (chickpeas) for the *pidyon ha-ben* – something I knew nothing about. Uncle Dave called and promised to attend and officiate.<sup>3</sup> Then we learned that Alan was a Levite and would not need to be redeemed.

Mama and Bernie came to see Alan later that summer. On this visit she gave me an electric *yahrzeit* light. She took one look at our living room and said, "Don't let Si sit in that chair." After a brief inspection of our apartment she asked, "Where's the machine?" I proudly pointed to our used washing machine and she dismissed that with a wave of the hand. She meant a sewing machine. "How can you expect your wife to keep house without a sewing machine? Larry... get her a sewing machine." We took her advice and shortly thereafter bought used sewing machine. I took dressmaking classes at the local high school. In addition to making most of my clothes, I also put the machine to good use making curtains and drapes for the apartment, and customized knee patches for Alan's overalls.

Fortunately, Alan gave us a relatively easy introduction to the joys of parenthood. Since I had trouble getting back to sleep after a nighttime feeding, I delegated the nights to Larry and all three boys expected him to solve nighttime problems even when they were older. When Alan was three months old, Mrs. Ramsay suggested that we stop giving him a night bottle. It was painful to let him cry but she was right – in just a few nights he got used to sleeping through the night. Mrs. Ramsay's position was that parents have rights too, one of which was to get a good night's sleep.

Alan was able to amuse himself from an early age. I set up his Infanseat in front of a window and he'd enjoy watching the cars, trees, birds, and Mrs. Ramsay working in the yard. He was very late in teething (I asked the doctor if anything was wrong!), sitting, and walking. He didn't really crawl until he was close to a year old – he used to roll for locomotion. In contrast, he was very verbal very early. He had very sunny disposition and was a source of much joy.

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<sup>3</sup> My Uncle Dave Lapporte used to go on regular fish-buying trips to Lubeck, Maine. That year he planned his trip with a stopover in Boston for Alan's *pidyon-ha-ben*. He hadn't called home for a while and his son Allen called us to see if we'd heard from him. We hadn't, but on the appointed day he phoned from Boston and Larry picked him up and brought him to our house. After admiring the baby and finding out that we would not have the *pidyon-ha-ben*, he noticed the brass candlesticks and exclaimed, "So that's what happened to Bubbie's candlesticks."

## Mama's Last Visit

When Alan was seven months old, Larry's mother needed a place to recuperate after her hospitalization for polycythemia. Bertha was living in a 1-bedroom apartment so she had no room and the stairs in Martha's house made that an impractical choice. Larry wanted her to stay with us instead of a nursing home, thinking Alan would be good "medicine." I realized that Mama would require lots of attention so I quickly weaned Alan to a cup.

Although I knew she meant well, she questioned and criticized everything I did. One day she asked why I never made soup. When I said I didn't have a good recipe, she scoffed, "Oh, you American girls can't do anything without a recipe. Just put vegetables into the pot and cook a few hours." My mortar and pestle reminded her of her youth. Under her direction, I made poppyseed filling for the *hamentashen* – pounding the seeds like in the old country. It was one of those no-recipe projects I used to hold in such awe.

One day Alan woke up covered with a rash. Mama, who had raised five kids, told me it was definitely measles. I made an emergency appointment with the doctor – he took one look and said it was prickly heat, unusual in March. His prescription: no more undershirts.

It didn't take too long for the responsibility, strain, and lack of privacy to overwhelm me. I could never leave Mama alone with Alan because she was too weak to pick him up. And I didn't feel right taking Alan out and leaving her home alone. I was a virtual prisoner in my own house with someone I barely knew! The day I had an impacted wisdom tooth I left Alan upstairs with Mrs. Ramsay – one of the few times I imposed on her in this way. After the extraction I took the bus back. As I walked up the hill to our house an emergency truck passed me. I ran the rest of the way, fearing the worst.



Alan at 10 months  
enjoying the fresh air

In the two months of her stay I lost 20 pounds. I felt I had no choice but to ask Larry to take his mother back to New York. When he told her, she cried and begged me not to send her away. Naturally, this made me feel guiltier than ever. Larry tried to cheer me up by telling me that I'd done more than my share – more than her own daughters – and that she had enjoyed those two months. She died several months later.

## The Jewish Connection

Shortly after we moved to Arlington, we started going to services at a synagogue in Belmont, a more prosperous, more Jewish community. The first time we went Larry was given the *Hagba aliyah* and everyone made such a fuss over how he did it that he was given this honor whenever we went. I had told this to Mama, thinking she would be proud of him. She said that *aliyah* was usually given to an *am ha-aretz* (ignoramus). After going from time to time we were asked to join the synagogue. When Larry explained that we couldn't afford the dues, they offered us a \$25 student membership.

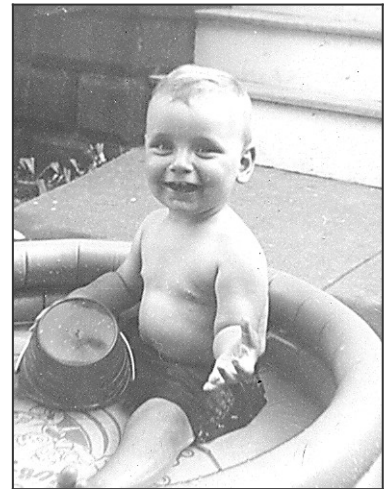
After some months a new family moved in across the street and the woman called over to me. She had seen my *Shabbat* candles in the window and wanted to meet her Jewish neighbor.

Eventually another Jewish couple moved nearby and invited us to their *seder* – that was the first time I’d seen romaine lettuce used for *maror*.

### Life in Arlington

Most of our neighbors were typical blue-collar folk. Our paperboy lived next door. When the newspaper was doing a readership survey, Phil, who couldn’t wait to get out of school, was incredulous when we told him how many years of education Larry had (20+ at that point).

One neighbor was a couple of Armenian parentage. They had tried for years to have children but without success. Then an adoption came through, followed in a few months by another adoption. All of a sudden they had two very active little boys. Until then I’d thought they were our age but their youthful look disappeared almost immediately (they were close to 40).



Alan at 14 months

Having grown up in the Midwest, I got a kick out of living in a historic part of the country. On Patriot’s Day (April 19) I’d take the boys down to Mass. Ave. to watch the parade reenacting Paul Revere’s ride. The sight of “Cardinal Cushing’s Cadets” – junior-high kids wearing uniforms and carrying mock rifles – made me realize the vast differences between ethnic groups. Can you imagine a Jewish school marching with rifles? We often took Alan to the historic sites at Lexington and Concord. Shortly before we moved away I took Alan and Saul to the Jason Russell house where the Arlington Minute Men had assembled. For some reason Alan remembered this but none of the more significant sites.

### Living on \$150 a Month



Alan at 18 months

I had the benefit of diaper service for a month after Alan and Saul were born – a welcome present from Dad and Trudy. After that I used cloth diapers (disposable diapers had not yet been invented and would have been too costly anyway). This meant I had to wash diapers every second or third day and hang them outside to dry. The first time they froze on the line I panicked at the sight of the stiff-as-a-board shapes instead of the usual gauze diapers flapping in the breeze. Luckily the wind blew them dry except for the part under the clothespins. Until we got the sewing machine, each diaper had to be folded to the appropriate shape. Once I started sewing, I sewed the diapers into the pre-folded shape and eliminating the extra step.

The day our second-hand (or was it third-hand?) washing machine conked out was a real disaster. I called Larry at the lab, expecting him to drop everything and do his usual magic with appliances. I’ll never forget his response: “For hundreds of years women took the laundry to the river bank...” I was mad but somehow we got past the diaper crisis. And later he did fix the washing machine.

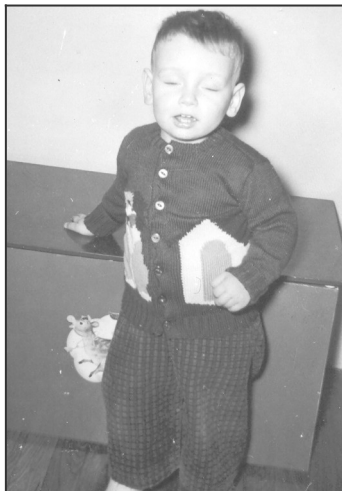


We were probably the only young couple that didn't fight over money – we didn't have enough to fight about! Between Larry's fellowship and the GI bill our income was \$150 a month (slightly more after Alan and Saul were born). Our rent was \$90 a month the first year, slightly more after the Ramsays put in a modern furnace and hot-water heater. We felt lucky those first few summers that Larry got a job at Lincoln Lab – so he could make enough money to tide us over during the school year.

Until she died, we sent Mama a check every month. The next year Bernie was sick and Larry bought him a warm coat, warm sweaters, and other clothes. Between scrimping all year and the summer boost in income, we actually saved enough money to make the down payment on our house in Schenectady.

How we pinched pennies those first six years! When I worked at MIT, I used to go to the ditto room (the copy machine of that day) and bring home the overruns of the professor's problem sheets so Larry could use the backs for his homework calculations. We used powdered milk (the just-reconstituted bubbly liquid reminded Larry's mother of drinking milk right from the cow!). We bought used appliances and between the old appliances, old house, and old car, Larry spent a fair amount of time doing repairs. Larry even bought an old bike from the paper boy so he could bike to Harvard when I needed the car.

Larry made his desk from a door, turned an old chest into a changing table, and built shelves and tables to save money. Taking Mama's advice we got a sewing machine... used, naturally. With Mrs. Ramsay's encouragement I made most of my own clothes, something I continued to do after we moved to Schenectady. She also taught me how to knit and soon I was cranking out sweaters, hats, and mittens for the whole family.



**Alan at 20 months, in front of the toy box Larry made and wearing a sweater I made. Alan put his toys away before bed every night**

Being a typical New Englander, Mrs. Ramsay was very frugal. Following her lead I not only canned the pears and tomatoes from our yard, I made the braided rugs we still have. I cut my own hair, Mama's, and Larry's. He cut the boys' hair. I made dinners from a half-pound of chopped meat, fish (which was very cheap then), and canned tuna. I made curtains out of sheets. When Larry's long-sleeved shirts wore out at the elbow, I made them into short-sleeved ones. If the collars got frayed, I took them off and sewed them back with the good side out. When the rocking chair upholstery tore, I made a slipcover, following directions out of a book.

In Alan's kindergarten class, each child made a little book about their family. On the page about me Alan's book said, "This is my mother. She patches our clothes." It hurt, but it was true.

We didn't go out much but when we did, we didn't pay for babysitters. We joined a student cooperative – parents sat for each other and took turns keeping track of the debits and credits.

Although the experts stress the importance of using the same babysitter, Alan's sitters were a different (usually bearded) student every time.

We were a one-car family the entire time we were in Massachusetts. Except for days when I really needed the car, Larry drove our 1956 Chevvie, which I dubbed “old Bessie,” to school or work. I’d use the stroller to walk downhill to Mass. Avenue where there was a grocery store and pharmacy. Walking back up the hill with a stroller was hard work.

Often I walked down the hill (probably three-quarters of a mile), folded up the stroller, and took Alan on the bus to the library in downtown Arlington. On one trip I’ll never forget, Alan spotted a handicapped man on the bus and in clear loud voice said, “Look at that funny little man.” I tried to hush him up, to no avail; he insisted that he was right. Then, as luck would have it, we saw the same man on the bus going home, “Look, there’s that funny little man again” (He was only two at the time but instead of being proud of his language skills, I was cringing in embarrassment.)

The library satisfied my need to keep learning; I mostly read histories and biographies – books by Winston Churchill come to mind – and American classics like *The Last of the Mohicans*. In nice weather Larry would sometimes bike in to school so I could have the car. Having him bike to school lost its charm after our friend Steve Groves was injured when a careless motorist opened his car and threw him from his bike. Since every time I had the car meant Larry had less time for finishing his degree, I only used the car for essentials like visits to the doctor or driving the nursery school carpool.

### **Parent Education 101**

The first election I voted in was the 1960 Kennedy - Nixon race. Larry was for Nixon. I was against Nixon. We were having a heated discussion one night and Alan’s eyes followed it like a tennis match. Before long he got frightened and started to cry. He was so upset we agreed not to disagree in front of him again.

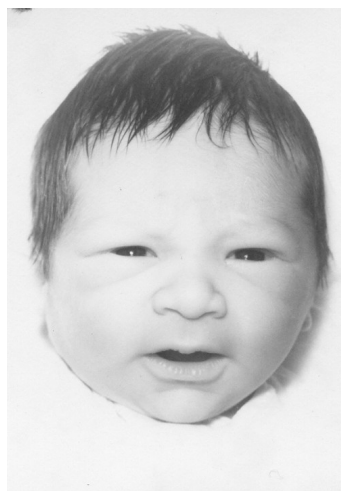
Interestingly enough, it was my Aunt Nettie who called my attention to the only television program Alan used to watch on a regular basis – *Captain Kangaroo*. Shortly after the show came on she had seen it and wrote that Alan would probably like it. Captain Kangaroo, Mr. Green Jeans, and Mr. Moose were much beloved by Alan and later Saul and Steve.

Alan was an early talker and loved to talk. In fact, one time I said, “You’re so sweet I’m going to eat you up.” And Alan responded, “How will I talk?” By the time he was three he was always talking to and about imaginary friends. At first I thought it was cute. But I was worried something was wrong so I asked the pediatrician. He said all Alan needed was some real playmates and urged me to send him to nursery school. My Dad offered to pay but I was too proud to accept his help.

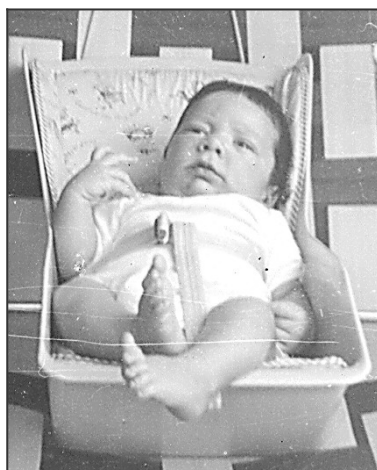
### **Now we are four!**

The following year, after Saul was born, when Alan’s Grandpa made his offer again, I was ready to take him up on it. To make it easier for me to accept, he asked, “What if the synagogue offered a scholarship for bright children. Wouldn’t you accept?” “Of course.” “Well Alan is a bright boy and I’m offering him a scholarship.” So with Grandpa’s scholarship, Alan attended our synagogue’s nursery school three mornings a week. As predicted, the imaginary

friends soon disappeared. Nursery school had another effect – Alan caught every cold and virus infection and Saul did too.



**Saul at 3 days Old**



**Saul at 6 weeks**



**Alan and Saul December 1961**

Saul's birth was planned to coincide with Larry's Ph.D. But the Ph.D. didn't come on schedule! We never expected graduate school to take five years. I kept asking Larry why he didn't finish up (despite the fact that all the students who had been there when he came were still there). When Saul was born, Dad and Trudy's gift was paying for a woman to help me during my first week home from the hospital.

Alan was so easy right from the start, I just assumed I'd have an easy time with our second child. How wrong I was! I had nausea and backaches throughout the pregnancy. I couldn't nurse Saul because he tore my nipples and I got an infection. He was noisy and demanding – a difficult boy from the start. So it was with mixed feelings that I packed away the maternity clothes and layette the second time. As a child, I always envied my friends who had more than one sibling. Larry and I had talked about having more than two... but that was before Saul.

With Alan bringing home colds and other germs from nursery school, Saul had many more bouts with sickness than Alan had those first years. He was not the easy-going baby his brother was. He was very stubborn. He sat, crawled, and walked sooner, but smiled less and was slower to talk, especially away from home. He jumped so much in his playpen, he shook it apart. He had an intense way of focusing on what he was doing. Later, his nursery school teacher said she wished her teenaged son could concentrate as well as Saul! From a very early age, he refused to let his big brother push him around.

None of the other graduate students in Larry's group had kids. When Larry's professor had the group over, we brought the boys. To the bachelors, Saul's projectile vomiting was exciting – they kept asking if and when he'd perform again. The two Jewish bachelors, Richard Zahlen and Julius Feinleib, took a special interest in Alan. They decided he needed toughening up and tried (unsuccessfully) teaching him how to fight.

## Family Visits

Bernie used to take the bus or train to see us several times a year. Once he went with



Alan and Grandpa Sept 1961

Larry to the park nearby and, with the typical New Yorker's view of things, observed that the wooded hillsides were lovely... all it would take was a paved path and benches to make a nice park!

My Dad came to visit once or twice a year. After Alan was three or so, Dad enjoyed taking Alan for a pony ride when he came to visit.

Nate and Rose continued to feel very close to me. When I was pregnant with Alan, they sent me a check for \$50 for maternity clothes (which paid for most of my wardrobe at Filene's Basement). Several times Nate sent me a "Care package" with odds and ends of clothes on sale at the store where he worked. Then in the summer of 1961 Uncle Nate, Aunt Rose, JoAnn, and Gail drove to see us. They got a kick out of seeing "little Margie" as the mother of two boys.

One day I had an unexpected call from Si Spielman. He was driving in the area and said he and "the boss" would sure appreciate a good kosher meal. I took the hint and invited them for dinner, assuming that he was referring to Bertha when he said, "the boss." You can imagine my surprise when Si and another man appeared at the front door! It really was his boss!

In 1962 we took our first vacation. Cape Cod was a 3-4 hour drive so one Sunday during the winter we took an exploratory trip and found a cottage. We rented a 2-bedroom cottage for a week in June, when it would be half price. This was such a success, we suggested meeting Bob



Larry, Alan, me, Renah, Bernie, Zvi  
Memorial Day in Brooklyn, 1960



Cousins Gail and  
JoAnn Weiss with  
Alan, 1961



Trudy, Dad, me, Janet, Bob, Marcus  
at Cape Cod

and Janet there for a joint vacation the following June. Dad and Trudy took a cottage nearby for a full reunion. I prepared all the food in advance to control the *kashrut* and cost.



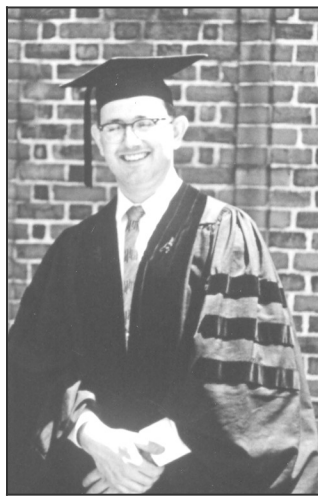
Saul at 1 year

Saul was his usual boisterous self. He completely overwhelmed Marcus. In preparing Marcus for our vacation, Bob and Janet kept referring to Saul as “Baby Saul.” Imagine Marcus’ surprise to discover that “Baby Saul” was a bully who pushed him down. The adults stayed up late talking, Saul demanded his breakfast at the crack of dawn, and Alan was in a grumpy phase. Though we were all exhausted, we proclaimed it a success (but never did it again).

Later that summer we had a special request from Bertha. She needed surgery and asked if Gail, then 11, could stay with us for several weeks while she recovered. Until that visit, Gail barely tolerated me – I had taken her favorite Uncle away. But those three weeks put me in her good graces forever. She got to push Saul in the stroller and play with her little cousins. Plus I taught her how to bake ... something her mother never had time for.

No matter how hot it was, we baked cakes and cookies every day. She had a wonderful time.

### Doctor Kravitz At Last!



When Larry finally got approval to write his thesis, I decided to type it myself to save money. Larry rented an electric typewriter for me and I started typing every day as soon as the boys went to bed for their naps or for the night. In those days, a thesis had to be submitted with five carbon copies (xerox copies were so new Harvard was not sure they were of archival quality). Another condition: no more than three erasures per page (white-out hadn’t been invented yet). The pressure was on - so much so that I broke out in hives. What a relief when we finally finished and the thesis was accepted.

To my surprise, Bernie, Bertha, and Meir came from New York for Larry’s graduation from Harvard. I bought a new dress for the occasion – my first in five years. Larry had to be there early so Bernie and I took the bus down to Harvard and were amused at all the negative comments we heard about Harvard on the bus. The ceremony was impressive. It started with the Cambridge sheriff riding in on horseback and included a number of addresses, including one in Latin.

Larry decided to take a half-year post-doc to finish up some work and give himself time to find the right job. He had interviews at GE, Bell Labs, Ford, and IBM. I was relieved that he didn’t want to work at IBM - I’d heard the “big brother is watching you” management style extended to the wives. I favored Ford because it was closest to Chicago. But after weighing advice from his professors and others he decided on GE.

## Moving To Schenectady

Before we moved to Arlington in 1958, we told Bertha about our apartment, and the first thing she asked about was the neighborhood school. We laughed off her concern since there was no way we'd be there for five years. Little did we know!

As it turned out, Alan was the only Jewish child in his kindergarten class. In October, Alan told us that his teacher was Jewish! How did he know? She was teaching the class a song about the king of Israel! Christmas preparation was starting in October. Larry tried to protest but it was futile. This made us even more eager to move on to the next stage of our family's life.

That summer we made two house-hunting trips to Schenectady. On one we had an extra mission: Gail Spielman was attending a music and arts camp in the Adirondacks and Bertha asked us to visit her and bring her frozen kosher dinners.

When we looked at houses, we rejected any that didn't have a living room large enough to accommodate the piano. As soon as I stepped into the house at 885 Cunningham Court, I loved it. We were so excited about signing the contract, we called the family as soon as it was accepted. My Dad asked, "Don't you think you should rent a house to get to know the area?" Bob asked, "Is it one of those 'nothing down' houses?" And Bertha asked, predictably, "What do you know about the schools?" We laughed at their lukewarm response, certain that we had made the right decision.

When I told the kosher butcher in Chelsea <sup>4</sup> I was moving away, he asked where I was going and then extended his sympathy when I said Schenectady. "Schenectady? Nothing there!" But, I protested, it's just 20 miles from Albany. Clearly I hadn't been there yet!



**Gail Spielman came to visit us a few weeks after we moved**

The movers came for our furniture before dawn and parked in front of the house. Alan was up early and woke us with the news: "There's a beer truck in front of our house." I don't know why he thought it was a beer truck. Seeing signs of life, the movers rang the bell and got to work.

Alan had had the chicken pox several weeks before and, as we were leaving Arlington, I spotted a single pock on Saul's neck. By the time we got to the hotel in Schenectady, not only was Saul covered with pox, he had such a high fever he was almost unconscious. I asked the desk clerk to send for the house physician. Soon a doctor called, asked me a few questions, then without seeing Saul at all, sent over a prescription and told me to put Saul in the tub to cool him down. I don't know what the medicine was, but it did bring the fever under control. Saul woke up and was hungry. We called room service (a first for me) and ordered cinnamon toast and cocoa for him. Needless to say, I did not go to the closing on our Cunningham Court house the next day, since Saul was still sick.

So, with much excitement and anxiety, we were finally on our way. Larry had a real job and we were moving into my dream house!

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4. Chelsea had once been the center of the Boston Jewish community. By 1963 it had become the "junkyard capital of the world" as proudly proclaimed on a sign at the city limits. You could still see the remnants of its previous life in the boarded up synagogues and several functioning butcher shops

## PART VI – THE SCHENECTADY YEARS

A few weeks before we left Massachusetts, we invited a newly appointed Harvard professor and his wife to dinner—the Ehrenreichs had just moved from Schenectady. I was eager to know about life in Schenectady. Tema Ehrenreich's words were prophetic: "It's a great place to raise kids but after ten years I was ready for something more."

We all look back with fondness to our ten years in Schenectady. Those were the years of family growth and development. Although we lived in Arlington for five years, we lived there as transients and made little attempt to put down roots.

In contrast, we immediately viewed Schenectady as our permanent home. We made decisions about the house very differently than any we made about our apartment in the Ramsay's house. We wanted to become a real part of the community, the sooner, the better. One of the things that appealed to us about Cunningham Court was that it looked like a community. It promised to be an ideal setting to raise our family and we took to it like the proverbial ducks to water.

### **Life on Cunningham Court**

Moving day was snowy and messy. As the movers started unloading the truck, a friendly red-haired boy about Alan's age came over to act as our official "greeter." He told us all about the neighborhood, including where to shop (not mentioning that his family owned the store), where to buy gas (ditto), and other important facts. Jerry Golub became one of Alan's best friends and his younger brother David soon paired up with Saul.<sup>1</sup>

We were warmly greeted by all of our neighbors on the court—about a dozen families in all. There were usually enough kids around to keep everyone happy and we all looked out for each other's kids. Our first next door neighbors, the Hawkins family, had seven kids. I never ceased to marvel at how calm Jim and Maryanne were and how well behaved their kids were. At least once a year there was a block party to welcome or say goodbye to neighbors, celebrate a birth, graduation, anniversary, or other occasion.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1998, when working as a consultant to the Food Marketing Institute, I learned that Jerry Golub was one of the top executives of Price Chopper, the enlarged, now multi-state, company his grandfather had started in Schenectady.



Shortly after we moved in, I sent away to the U.S. Geological Survey for an aerial photo of our street. Despite the beautiful lawn and landscaping—a tribute to the house’s first owners—the earlier aerial view showed our house lot as a block of white sand. During the first few years we worked hard to transform the backyard into a pleasant shady spot. We planted dry-rooted trees and flowering shrubs we ordered from catalogs (much cheaper than balled in burlap trees and shrubs) and gave them a lot of water and loving care. At least once a week Larry and I would make an inspection tour of our plantings and Larry would say, “Next year we’ll have shade.” It took about seven years before we actually did.



Larry spent many hours working on the yard. The boys caught his dedication and enthusiasm. One year Alan and Saul grew sunflowers that were over six feet tall. Several years they grew pumpkins, which they sold in the neighborhood. Another year Alan wanted to grow corn. He worked hard tending his plot but the poor soil only produced five-inch ears of corn. He’d pick two of these miniature ears right before dinner and we’d split them to savor his harvest. Carrots were not successful either. But we did enjoy good tomatoes and eventually some shade.

Behind our backyard was a sandy field that drew the neighborhood kids like a magnet. In decent weather, you could usually find kids digging “forts” behind the fence. I always marveled at how hard they worked—if you stood over them with a whip you couldn’t get them to work any harder. One year Larry planted some pine trees in this field to shade our yard and shield us from the garden apartments (or as Saul called them the “impartments”) on the other side of the empty lot. When Steve returned to Schenectady in the mid-eighties, he described the huge pine trees behind the house.

### **Feathering the nest**

When we moved into the house, my Dad—remembering my childhood plea for a dog—offered to buy the boys a dog. He didn’t realize that in the intervening two decades I had lost all desire for a dog. I suggested that he get them a swing set and jungle gym instead.



After years of living like graduate students, I was anxious to give our home a more established look. But with five years of pent-up demand, we had to watch our spending carefully. Using directions from a book (!), I made lined drapes and curtains for every room in the house except the living room. Larry and I painted the inside of the house ourselves. I let him convince me I was more suited to doing the windows and trim, a slow and tedious job.

Our living room was huge—about 25 by 15 feet—so my grand piano finally looked like it belonged. But that's all we had for the living room. Right before Steve was born we bought a sofa. Then we asked the “decorator” from Schenectady's one nice furniture store to advise us on furnishing the living room. She helped us select the Henredon armchair and the striped chairs we still own. Glancing about the expansive room, she said, “Here's the perfect place for a curio cabinet—do you have any curios?” We responded, “Only ourselves.”

We made a shopping trip to Boston the year after we moved away. Alan gawked at the downtown buildings (not very big in 1964) like a real small-town kid. We hit Filene's Basement (not a chain store then but a



Alan 1965

A few years later, Larry hired a carpenter from the lab to put extra cupboards in the playroom. In this and other projects, Larry did all the planning, painting, staining, and varnishing.

### **Getting out in the community**

Shortly after we got settled, the University of Chicago alumni office asked me to run the local Alumni Giving Campaign. I accepted, thinking it would be a nice way to meet people. One of the unforgettable calls I made was to someone Larry knew from the lab. He agreed with the importance of giving to our alma mater but said he was saving up to make a big splash! (What a great line!) I later learned my efforts set a new record for Schenectady alumni gifts...probably because no one had ever agreed to lead the campaign and make phone calls before!

Our first contacts with the Jewish community began at GE. Larry quickly made friends with Marvin Garfinkel, Morrie Blumenfeld, Ben Segall, and several other Jewish scientists. His boss Bill Piper invited us to dinner—Bill and Barbara were friendly but seemed too WASPy to me.

The Research Lab sponsored a Newcomers Club for scientists' wives and I was happy to get out and meet my counterparts. One of the women gave a talk about her hobby and it took me quite a while to catch on what she was talking about when she said the first step in making pottery was "going to the liver to get cray" (she was from China). One of the programs introduced me to gardening. My first serious effort resulted in a severe backache, which tempered my enthusiasm. One newcomer introduced herself as the wife of a theoretical physicist... explaining that they're the ones who tell the experimental physicists what to do! Larry got a laugh out of that.

### **Music, music, music**



**Alan age 9**

With the piano in a place of honor in the living room, it was time to put it to good use. When Alan was in second grade, I started teaching him to play the piano. I had no intention of being his music teacher for long, but I wanted to teach him the basics—how to read music, etc. When Joel Feigenheimer's mother heard that I was giving music lessons, she asked me to teach Joel too. I didn't consider myself a professional music teacher so I turned her down. She persisted until I agreed...but on my terms. I'd do it without pay. Every few months Harriet would give me a present. The lessons didn't last too long (I can't remember why).

Alan liked music but soon lost interest in the piano. When he got into fourth grade the school offered instruction in orchestral instruments as preparation for a school orchestra. Alan wanted to play the violin. He liked to stand right next to me to show off his latest achievement. I'd encourage him to stand further away so I could really experience the music (The screeching up close was painful). He was very enthusiastic so we took the teacher's advice and arranged for private lessons. Like most kids, he enjoyed the lessons more than the practicing.



**Saul age 6**

better.

After some months, Alan's violin teacher suggested that he had progressed to the point where he should have his own instrument. We learned as much as we could about violins and went to a store in Albany (only 20 miles distant but it seemed a world away). Once we told the owner our financial limits, he presented three instruments for us to consider. We let Alan make the final decision.

Unfortunately the thrill of owning his own instrument wore off quickly and the nagging to practice soon set in. I'll never forget the time Alan shredded his bow on the fan when he was practicing in Larry's study. As he told it, the fan sucked in the bow but we knew

Saul started begging for piano lessons while I was teaching Alan. When he was in kindergarten I taught him the basics and the following year I looked for a real music teacher. I settled on Edmund Morris, a graduate of the Peabody Institute, who was close to eighty at the time. At first he turned me down, saying he never took such young students. But when I told him how serious and determined Saul was and that he already knew how to read music, Mr. Morris agreed to accept him on a trial basis.

At first, I used to take Saul to lessons myself. Eventually I arranged for Sherut (our bus cooperative) to drop him off there after school. One of our drivers, an older gentleman, used to say he took Saul to "tickle the ivories."

### **This is #3 and he got the best of me**

I always wanted to have more than two kids. Our neighbor Sandy Golub, mother of Jerry and David, had a little girl some months after we arrived. She claimed she knew how to increase the chances of conceiving a girl. I got pregnant shortly after Shari Golub was born and looked forward to the new baby... hoping for a girl but mostly hoping everything would be well.

Alan, remembering how Saul's arrival had turned his life upside down, used to caution Saul about the difficulties that lay ahead. "Babies smell bad, cry a lot, and mess up your room." One night he rigged up a maze of string to keep the as-yet-unborn baby out of their room.

Unfortunately, the third pregnancy was very hard on me. I had bad backaches for most of the time. By the time Steve was born, I was twisted out of shape by muscle spasms. The slightest movement would trigger a painful spasm.



**Steve 5 weeks**

My obstetrician came to see me in the hospital the day after the delivery and asked me to roll over—I couldn't. He assured me a little heat would solve the problem so he ordered a special moist heating pad. The nurse couldn't understand why I kept complaining that the pad didn't feel warm...after all, she'd set it at 95°. In other words, she had me lying on a cold damp pad. It took some explaining to convince her that my body temperature, which she took every day at 5:30 a.m., was higher than the heating pad. I came home from a week in the hospital, still twisted to one side and in a lot of pain.



**Steve at 3 months**



**Steve at 3 months**

The OB recommended a “back doctor” who kept prescribing different medicines (some the pharmacist warned me not to take). My dad called every day to ask if I could stand up straight yet. After a few weeks he checked the *Directory of Medical Specialists* and saw that my “back doctor” was not listed as a qualified specialist. Dad suggested I see Leon Levine, whose credentials impressed him. Dr. Levine took one look at how I was standing, slid a piece of plywood under my left foot, and told me to get my left shoe built up to compensate for my raised right hip.

Because of my back problems, I came home from the hospital after Steve was born with instructions not to pick up the baby. This was very hard on all of us. I nursed Steve for four months so when Larry was home I depended on him to pick the baby up. When Steve was a little older I was in a body cast and I couldn't cuddle him as much as I'd like. So my back problem affected all of us. Steve was the least demanding of all the

boys—it was as if he knew I was having a rough time. He slept through the night the first night home from the hospital. I'd heard this happened occasionally but didn't think I'd ever experience it.

After the difficult pregnancy, delivery, and recovery, I knew Steve would be our last baby. I really treasured my moments with him. As with the other boys, I always wanted to share the joy and fascinating changes with family... but we had no family nearby. I think I was more patient with Steve, and Alan and Saul complained that Steve had it easier because I was more lenient and less demanding with him.

I baked all sorts of pastries and stocked the freezer while I was pregnant, just in case we'd be having a *briss*. In contrast to Alan's and Saul's *briss*, which were private events in the hospital, I wanted to make sure we'd have a fitting celebration. Everyone on our street came as did friends from the synagogue and GE. Dad and Trudy were the only family to make the trip. They fulfilled the role of "godparents" as they had for Alan and Saul (and as he did for Nadav 27 years later).

### **The Nursery School Maven**

Soon after we got settled in, the new JCC executive Harry Friedgut met with some of the Jewish men at the lab to get them interested in the JCC, then under construction. He got Larry named to the board before we even joined—how's that for a membership drive?



**Saul age 3**

When Larry mentioned that I had a degree in education, I was asked to set up the Nursery School—select furniture and toys, set school policies, hire staff, and recruit kids. First I contacted the state to learn about accreditation requirements. Then I appointed a small committee to share the work and responsibility.

Slowly but surely we made decisions about equipment and policies. We were determined to set the highest standards to assure state accreditation. Using state guidelines, I convinced the Board to alter the as yet unused nursery suite—the bathroom setup wasn't quite right. One board member who owned a toy store planned to send over a few toys left over from Christmas, thinking that would suffice. Again, I had to convince the Board that we could not depend on handouts—there was a difference between the toys and equipment for home use and the kind needed

for a first-rate school.

When it was time to interview staff, we had no lack of applicants. To get state accreditation, we decided to hire teachers with college degrees in early childhood education. Our choice for the head teacher was ideal—Ruth Fraster was a lovely warm Jewish woman with a master’s degree in early childhood education and lots of experience. For the second teacher we chose a real charmer. Martha Angell was bubbly and experienced and her talent and personality complemented Ruth’s. She was not Jewish but she would obviously be a great asset to the program

The Board endorsed our choices and I made an enemy for life—Adele Grayman (whose daughter Gale later married and divorced Zvi Ostrinsky). Adele was not a college graduate but she was a long-standing member of the Jewish community and very outspoken. She later started a nursery school at Beth Israel, the orthodox *shul*, but she never forgave me for denying her the JCC position.<sup>2</sup> I regretted hurting Adele’s feelings (she never spoke to me after that), but I knew I made the right decision: With qualified teachers we got accreditation, immediate stature as a respected school, and student teachers from SUNY and Russell Sage College.

Once the JCC nursery was up and running, my new friend Celia Mussman (our rabbi’s wife) asked me to set up a nursery school at our synagogue. Again, another round of meetings and months of planning resulted in another state-accredited school.

When we came to Schenectady, there were no Jewish nursery schools. Saul attended a poorly equipped cooperative nursery school in the basement of a church. But when it was time for Steve to attend nursery school, I had two schools vying for his registration. When I saw that the synagogue school had mostly girls signed up whereas the JCC had a balanced class, I enrolled Steve at the JCC. My friend Celia was miffed but I assured her I was merely looking out for what was best for my child.

### **Getting active at Agudas Achim**

Soon after we arrived we made our first visit to Agudas Achim (the Conservative *schul*) in downtown Schenectady and quickly got swept up in activities and responsibilities. At the first congregational meeting we went to, Larry asked why spending for education wasn’t increasing. He was put on the School Board almost immediately.

We attended Shabbat services with the boys twice a month. We helped plan programs and supported programs planned by our friends. I started going to Sisterhood and was always being pushed to take on more responsibility than I wanted. At one point I was vice president for education and programming.

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<sup>2</sup> When Gale Grayman became engaged to Zvi Ostrinsky several years later, our neighbor Roz Brien couldn’t understand why I was not invited to any of the bridal showers or luncheons—unusual considering I was his aunt and only local relative.

We joined a study group with ten other couples. Meeting monthly in each other's homes we discussed books and other topics of interest. There were several couples in the group from Europe and Israel—which broadened our outlook considerably. Harvey Happ's family fled from Germany to Shanghai during World War II. He always got a laugh when referring to his daughters as the two "Miss Happs." Frieda Rosner and her sister were survivors of the concentration camps. Yaffa Lown had grown up in Petach Tikvah. Ruth and Paul Westheimer were from central Europe (not sure where) and they were the first Jewish farmers I ever met.

Roland Lichtenstein was from Germany. He had a delightfully wry sense of humor. One evening he read an article describing a people with an ancient culture we all identified with immediately—they must be Jews. Then he revealed that he found the article in a magazine for American Indians (now called Native Americans).

Larry put in hundreds of hours as school board chairman. In addition he helped hire new staff (rabbi, *shammash*, educational director, teachers) and, much later, researched architects for our new building on the Troy Road. Out of town candidates often had dinner in our house. Needless to say, we were staunch financial supporters of the synagogue also.

We didn't really appreciate Agudas Achim until we left. The congregation had about 300+ members and a full-time rabbi but no cantor. Lay leaders—Joe Cohen and Murray Prager (whose son Elliot was the headmaster of the Jewish Day School for 7 years) provided the inspiration and know-how to make services very involving and meaningful. Joe frequently read the Torah and Murray acted as cantor unless a bar mitzvah or teen-aged youth was prepared to fill those roles. Through regular attendance at Agudas Achim, I learned to follow and then participate in services.

### **The Hebrew School**

Larry's role as chairman of the school board was a source of continuing aggravation—parents called (usually at dinner time) to complain about the teachers, the homework, other people's kids...even the plumbing. Teachers called to gripe about the principal, parents, kids, pay, and working conditions. The rabbi claimed he was interested in the school but actually wanted nothing to do with it. I'll never forget Rabbi Mussman's menacing tone when he came to the house on his way out of town to demand the money due his wife. Celia hadn't turned in her paperwork and, according to the Kravitz rules, she wouldn't get her last check until she did.

At Rosh Hashanah services our first year, Shelly Weisman approached me and asked me to be her replacement in the congregation's Sunday School. Her husband Don, JCC executive and high holiday cantor at Agudas Achim, just accepted a new job in

Washington. After my initial teaching failure in Dayton, I was reluctant to try teaching again, but she convinced me to make the effort.

I had a class of about 20 kids but only about a dozen showed up every week—never the same kids two weeks in a row. As a result, there was no continuity and we were always reviewing. I was pregnant with Steve and when my doctor told me to stay off my feet, I did not finish the school year (again!). A true story: When I asked the class if anyone knew what a prophet was, Danny Lown (whose mother was a Hebrew School teacher) enthusiastically raised his hand. I had a hard time containing my laughter when he started explaining how you make a profit. About the only good thing to come from my half-year teaching second grade was my realization how futile the whole effort was.

When Alan went to Hebrew School, we saw that despite all Larry's hard work, Alan's experience in Hebrew School was not very good. He resented the after-school hours, the Israeli teachers, and the way they always started from the beginning year after year.

### **The Hebrew Academy**

It was about this time that Larry or I had written a letter to the *Schenectady Gazette*, complaining about the amount of time our local public school spent on Christmas. Our reward for this was a year-long series of phone calls from Leo Phaff, chief activist, fundraiser, recruiter, and cheerleader for the new Hebrew Academy in Albany. Leo was relentless in pursuing us and other Schenectadians he identified as prime candidates. When I didn't want to talk to him any more, he'd ask to speak to "hubby."

After turning him down several times, I finally agreed to let him come to the house to talk with us. He came after dinner and didn't leave until midnight. One reason I objected was my commitment to public education. I'll never forget how he took leave of us. As he was going out the door he paused and said, "Okay, don't send your son to the Hebrew Academy. Send him to public school and he'll turn out a half-baked Jew just like you!" I was shocked. The man took up our whole evening, accepted our hospitality, and insulted us as he left our home. But he succeeded in planting seeds of doubt.





**Saul's first day at HACD - he went by cab.**

We stayed up most of the night talking about the difficult choice before us—a choice we hadn't even considered hours before. There was the whole philosophical issue of private vs. public school... the idea of not going to school with the kids on the block... the serious question of transportation to Albany... and the prospect of assuming a long-term tuition burden when we were just beginning to enjoy having some disposable income.

We agonized over the decision until the week before school started. We finally decided to send Saul to HACD and he joined David Garfinkel, David BenDaniel, Jeff Brown, and Rachel Blumenfeld in a taxi to Albany on the first day of school.

Before long Larry, Morry Blumenfeld, and Marvin Garfinkel had a series of lunchtime meetings at the lab and decided to start a private bus service that would be cheaper and more reliable than a taxi. They organized the Sherut bus service and a whole new set of problems arose. The new company consumed untold hours and caused tension between and among families. But it also created a viable transportation scheme that attracted more Schenectady children to HACD every year.

When Alan's friend Bill Wallach signed up for ninth grade at the Hebrew Academy, Alan decided he'd go too. We didn't pressure him but we were pleased he'd have a better Jewish education than he'd been getting at Agudat Achim. I don't deny that the prospect of paying still more tuition was worrisome, but we were willing to make the sacrifice for our sons' Jewish education.

Larry learned that New York State was paying private companies to take handicapped kids to special schools in Albany. He started bidding on contracts and between the contract passengers and the growing Schenectady HACD contingent, Sherut eventually had three minibuses taking kids from Schenectady to Albany. Each bus meant more time on Larry's part—hiring (and firing) drivers, maintenance, schedules, contracts, decorum on the bus, etc. Everyone wanted to be picked up last and dropped off first.

One day, as I was talking on the phone, an operator broke in and told me to call a certain number because of an emergency. I called and learned one of our buses had been in an accident. What a jolt! It was the bus Alan and Saul were on. I wanted to rush to the scene but instead became "mission control"—calling the school, the parents, the police, keeping everyone informed. Fortunately no one was hurt. The boys laughingly described the scene where the kids were sorting out their eyeglasses and Larry Ziffer proclaimed, "And the Timex is still ticking." (quoting a TV commercial)

We learned that there is a great deal of parental involvement with a day school. Before we knew it we got sucked into fundraising and recruitment. Once I got over my inhibitions, I was surprisingly successful selling ads in the annual adbook. One day I opened the *Jewish World* and was startled to see my picture with a caption identifying me as “Schenectady Chairman” (a Leo Phaff publicity ploy). As Leo Phaff predicted, the first *Seder* after Saul started day school was qualitatively different from any we had ever experienced. In retrospect, I am grateful he was such a persistent advocate of day school education.

When we moved to Rockville, I took up the challenge of recruiting students for the Jewish Day School from all over the metropolitan area. Now, the classes fill up quickly without any recruitment campaign and no one can believe the tremendous effort I put in—parlor meetings, ads in the paper, repeated calls to prospects, open houses, etc. I even set up carpools and arranged a bus rendezvous for the kids from Bowie.

### **Boys will be boys**

One of the advantages of our involvement with the Hebrew Academy and the Sherut, was the friendships we made with other parents. Were it not for the Hebrew Academy, we would never have met Edwin and Judy Brown—they lived in the city of Schenectady (we lived in Niskayuna), they attended the Reform congregation, their kids were mostly older than ours. But we did become friends and I spent many enjoyable hours with Judy. Ed Brown had a veritable menagerie in his office and all the kids were fascinated with the animals.



**Steve, Saul, and Alan 1968**

One year, Judy called to ask me if Jeff could give Saul a pair of gerbils for his birthday. Sensing my lack of enthusiasm for pets, she assured me that gerbils don’t smell, take almost no care, and are quite lovable. She promised to take them back if we found otherwise. With great reluctance I agreed. Saul was indeed thrilled with them. And, yes, they were cute to watch. Everything was fine until one day I looked in the playroom and saw only one gerbil in the cage. I got hysterical! A small rodent was on the loose next to the kitchen. I threatened to

move into a hotel if the gerbil wasn’t caught by nightfall. I don’t recall whether he was found dead or alive but that certainly tempered my enthusiasm for the gerbils and when the pair died, they were not replaced.



Saul and Steve 1969

Then there was the year Alan went around collecting cocoons in a jar, which he stored in the garage. He forgot to put the lid on the jar and one day I stepped into the garage and the walls were crawling with the larvae—another less-than-red-letter day for me.

We had quite a scare one Sunday when I called the boys down for dinner and Saul came but not Alan. Saul said Alan was asleep. We went upstairs and found Alan unconscious on the floor. Saul poked him with his foot and Alan didn't budge. Despite Saul's insistence that Alan was "faking it," Larry picked him up and took him to the hospital. He'd been playing football and had a slight concussion.

### **Time for me at last**

By the time Steve turned three, I'd been home taking care of kids for ten years. It seemed like forever. It had been my decision to stay home when the boys were little, but I was feeling hemmed in. Many's the day I'd plead with Larry, "Can't we switch places for a day?" Alan and Saul went to nursery school for one year but I was so eager—desperate—to get out of the house, I sent Steve to nursery school for two years.

I joined the National Council of Jewish Women and enjoyed participating in their book club and court-watching group. I worked on a task force to add women to the jury panels. I also attended court sessions, which was quite an education. When I was teaching home-bound students a few months later, I was stunned to see one of my students in police court after a drug bust! (I knew she had hepatitis, but never gave a thought as to how she got it.)

One day something on the obituary page caught my eye. Almost every woman who died was labeled "housewife" while the obits for men were much more substantial. Now that I had some free time, I wanted to make sure my obituary would say something more than "housewife." With our obligations for day school tuition, we never seemed to have enough money for furnishings and vacations, etc. That evening I announced at the dinner table that I had decided to look for a job. Alan confirmed my worst self-image problems when he innocently asked, "What would you do? Be someone's servant like at home?"

With Steve in nursery school, I found a part-time job in the Schenectady public schools teaching students who could not attend school. Home teaching was fun because

I'd work with one student at a time. One boy had been in a motorcycle accident and was encased in a cast from chest to toe. When I started teaching him in the hospital he was an admitted bigot and I had to teach a unit on African history. We both learned a lot. One girl was an anorexic. Her parents hired a housekeeper who was always baking some delectable treat. She taught me how to bake with yeast. Next was a high school girl with hepatitis.

### **Back to work and back to school**

I enjoyed getting out of the house and being treated as a professional. I was bringing in a little money and started saving for a dining room set to replace the dinette set I'd picked out for my Dad's "bachelor" apartment. Working increased my status with the family—I was a professional—and my self-esteem as well.

Looking ahead, I felt the only jobs I could get in Schenectady were teaching or secretarial. I preferred teaching. Since I enjoyed working with kids one at a time, I decided to go for a master's degree at SUNY-Albany and become a reading teacher. When I went to SUNY for my admission interview, my adviser was very discouraging. He told me I'd have a rough time returning to school after such a long absence. The classes were all given in the evening. I'd have to attend summer sessions. The final insult, "Does your husband approve of this?" His negative attitude merely increased my determination to succeed.

I took the required courses one at a time, driving 20 miles each way to SUNY. Before I'd leave home, I'd prepare dinner, set the table, and leave instructions. It felt strange and irrelevant studying for exams and worrying about grades again. I did my student teaching during the summer, which was a drag. One of my classmates predicted that the kids would have a difficult time with my name. What neither of us knew was that on a popular TV show ("Bewitched") there was a witch named Mrs. Kravitz—the kids had no problem with my name. When we left Schenectady I had 12 credit hours toward my master's (and no regrets about leaving SUNY).

### **The Write Stuff**

Whenever I was involved as a volunteer, I usually wrote the publicity. I had several book reviews published in the paper and after our trip to Israel I wrote a few articles for the *Jewish World*. And every once in a while I'd get steamed up about something and write a letter to the *Schenectady Gazette*.

Still, I was taken by surprise when the new executive director of the JCC offered me a part-time job writing press releases and publicity for the Center. This was a lot of fun. For some of my stories, Alan and Saul took pictures and developed them, so it became a family enterprise. Like most writers, I enjoyed seeing my byline, even if it was only in the *Jewish World*. One of my favorite assignments was promoting the JCC's

health club. I was given the full experience—massage, sauna, etc.—so I could really describe the benefits. I also did a series profiling the JCC board members, which I was told had them vying for “who would be next.”

Soon I got another unsolicited job offer—editor (without pay) of the synagogue bulletin. I took the assignment seriously, getting articles to make the bulletin more interesting. Saul was reading adult books at a very early age and when he read *The Pledge*, a book about American businessmen who raised money and bought arms for Israel’s War of Independence, I asked him to write a book review.

### **Learning Hebrew**

When Saul started the Hebrew Academy, I decided to make another attempt to learn Hebrew. Fortunately, there was a class in beginning Hebrew in our congregation’s adult education program. Esther Oren was the teacher and I thought she was excellent; she was also Alan’s Hebrew School teacher and he thought she was awful. When Esther returned to Israel the following year, Alan and I shared a teacher again—Mira Braun—who I also enjoyed and Alan also hated. We used a text written by a teacher at the Hebrew Academy. I remember coming home from my first class and proudly saying to Saul in Hebrew, “The window is on the wall.” He dismissed my effort as “crazy.” Despite this, I persisted.

I was pleasantly surprised to discover that, for a lefty, writing Hebrew (right to left) is physically easier than writing English (left to right). After a series of lessons on restaurant vocabulary, I invited my class to our house for a restaurant experience. I wrote up menus in Hebrew and Larry and the boys reluctantly participated as waiters (naturally I did all the cooking myself.).

### **First trip to Israel**

After two or three years of Hebrew class, several of my classmates made plans to go to Israel. Coincidentally, this was shortly after my great-aunts Nettie and Sadie died and I inherited the grand sum of \$1,600 (They divided their estate equally among their nieces and nephews, and Bob and I got our mother’s share). One evening after class I mentioned to a young couple from Albany that I had inherited enough money to make the trip but couldn’t go because I had no one to leave my kids with. (The older women who did occasional babysitting told me they’d stay with three girls but not with three boys.)

Steve and Ethel Silverstein said they’d take care of my boys—they had an infant daughter and this would give them an opportunity to see what it would be like having the large family they ultimately wanted. Amazing! They wanted to do it just for the fun of it. We rushed home to tell Larry. He thought they looked like “hippies” and was not very enthusiastic about the idea. Nonetheless, I had taken the first step toward our trip.

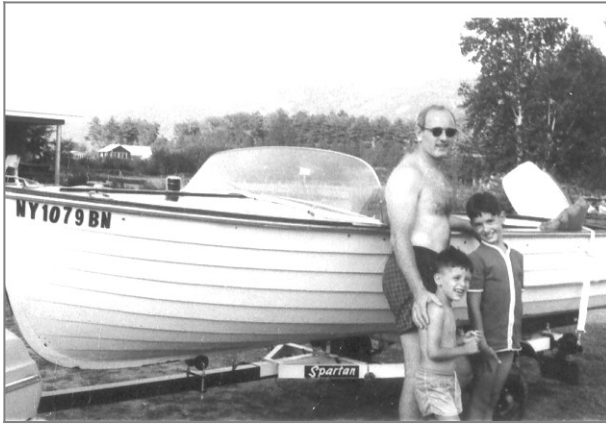
That was the best-planned trip we ever took. We studied the guidebooks and Moshe Pearlstein's archeology book for months, and we planned what we'd do every day of our 2½ week trip. I wrote for reservations at budget hotels. I arranged to meet my father's cousin, Shimon Berman in Ness Ziona.

Before we left, we insisted on paying the Silversteins to put things on a businesslike basis. I made all sorts of lists for them and prepared a lot of food. To Larry, Ethel and Steve were hippies but to me they were "salvation." As we got down to the last few days, they asked if they could take the boys camping. I tried to discourage them but they seemed convinced it was a great idea so I gave my approval. It wasn't until at least ten years later that Alan and Saul revealed that the camping trip was to Woodstock, site of a huge "hippie" gathering characterized by drug use, "skinny dipping," and other problems!

I thoroughly enjoyed our 1972 trip. It was the first time I'd left the boys for more than overnight (except for going to the hospital to have a baby). It was also my first trip to a foreign country (except for the few days at Expo 67 in Montreal). As for my newly learned Hebrew, I was good at asking questions, but the answers usually came too fast for me to understand. Nevertheless, knowing a little Hebrew was much better than knowing none at all.

We roamed around the Old City of Jerusalem while it was still mostly rubble and being rebuilt. In the narrow passageways we often had to step aside for donkeys loaded with building supplies. While we were in Jerusalem, my teacher Esther Oren's mother had us for dinner and Esther's husband took us for a walk on top of the Old City walls and to visit a kibbutz. We flew to Eilat and returned by bus. We rented a car and drove up the Jordan valley, often with an armed hitchhiking Israeli soldier in the back seat. We went to Safed, Tiberias, Hazor, Beit Shean,... cramming as many archeological sites as possible into our self-guided tour. An unforgettable experience.

## Our boat



**Larry, Steve, and Saul with our boat in 1970**

In 1970, Larry decided we should buy a boat and take advantage of the family recreation possibilities at Lake George and Sacandaga Reservoir. We'd been spending so little on non-necessities it sounded like a wild extravagance. He went sailing with some friends a few times and we rented a motorized canoe once or twice on Lake George.

After shopping around he bought a used 14-foot wooden boat, a used 35 hp motor, and a boat trailer. It was a modest rig and it enabled us to enjoy the lakes as a family. He'd occasionally take a day off or a half-day and we'd drive to the lake. The boys would fish, swim, snorkel, and water ski. The flippers I used for many years were the ones we got Alan for his thirteenth birthday!



**Alan and Saul with our camping trailer on our trip to Michigan and Chicago 1969**



**Alan and Saul at Friends Lake 1968**

Alan and Saul were always hassling each other about something. One time as Larry was backing the boat trailer into the water, they were arguing so much they didn't put in the plug. As the boat started filling with water they were still arguing whose turn/fault it was!

After we had the boat, we needed someplace to store it. That provided the impetus to add a screened porch to the back of the house. We had enjoyed our screened porch in Arlington and knew it would be a worthwhile addition. Larry designed the porch with one removable wall so he could roll the boat into the porch for winter storage. This removable wall provided the basis for adding a *sukkah*, which was an added benefit.

### **Recreation and vacations**

For the most part, we still led a rather frugal life. We rarely ate out or even went to the movies. Entertainment was usually going to a friend's house or inviting them to ours. I continued to spend very little on clothes. I made my own maternity clothes when I was pregnant with Steve and made long skirts and dresses for Hebrew Academy dinner dances. When we went to Israel, I made most of the clothes I wore on the trip.

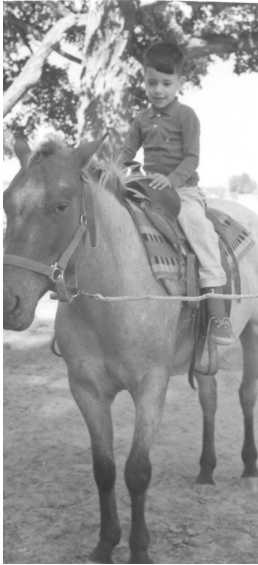
We had only one car for the first two years—if I needed the car I'd drive Larry to and from work. One wintry afternoon I was nudging Alan to get into his jacket and boots because I had to go pick Larry up. He didn't want to stop what he was doing. He tried to convince me he was responsible enough to be left home alone: "If there's an emergency, I'll pull a chair up to the telephone to call 911, then I'll put on my snowpants and boots..."

When it was obvious that I needed my own car to drive the Hebrew School and nursery school carpools, my Dad mentioned that he was ready to get rid of his old Peugeot. Larry used a business trip to Chicago as an opportunity to drive home our "new car." We later bought a used station wagon.

For vacations we'd rent a camping trailer to save on hotel and food costs. In 1969, we pulled a trailer across the Canadian side of Lake Ontario on our way to visit the Helmans in Michigan and the rest of the family in Chicago. We visited a variety of parks in New York State with camping trailers. Howard and Gail went to the University of Rochester and we visited them at school, again using the camping trailer in a nearby park. I developed a repertoire of easy meals so although there was preparation at home, once we were on the road, I didn't have to worry about cooking. In prior travels, I always helped with the driving but once we started pulling a trailer (boat or camping), I could no longer help. Larry tried and tried to teach me but I just couldn't maneuver the trailer.

In 1967 there was a World's Fair in Montreal and we decided to take the boys. We stayed in prefab units put up for Expo 67. Much to our surprise we saw Renah and a male friend at the fair. For most of our visit, we were accompanied by pouring rain and we started to joke about Larry's black cloud.





**Steve 1969**

In 1968 a neighbor told us about a nice lake with inexpensive rental cottages. With high hopes we went to Friends Lake in the pre-season to save money. It was cold and rained every day. Larry's black cloud struck again. To this day I can't understand why we didn't head for home, but we stuck it out for the whole week.

After one siege of muscle spasms in my back, I could hardly walk. But I discovered that riding Alan's bike felt good. That year, Larry got me a bike for my birthday. One of the boys' friends commented that a bike sure was a strange present for a mom. It was a great choice. I spent many pleasant hours riding around the lagoon in Central Park. Often I'd meet Judy Brown there—she was recovering from a ski accident and also benefited from non-weight-bearing exercise.

When Alan was ten, he wanted to go to sleep-away camp. Paying day school tuition really eliminated that option. Instead, we sent him, and later Saul, to Camp Givah, a day camp run by Temple Israel in Albany.

We encouraged Alan to join his friend Joel's Boy Scout troop, thinking scout camp would be an affordable alternative. Strange as it seems, Alan bought a second-hand scout uniform from our cleaning lady's son. He went to a few activities. I remember he came home from one winter outing with every item of clothing and bedding reeking of smoke from the wood fire. I'm not sure what actually happened on that trip, but Alan soon lost interest in scouting (proving the wisdom of his minimal investment in gear).

## That's Entertainment



Me with Steve and Alan in Watkins Glen,  
New York, 1969

Schenectady didn't have any resident performing groups but there were several ways to see live performances. Sometimes new Broadway-bound plays would preview in Schenectady. Once SUNY was developed, we occasionally went to lectures and concerts there. Schenectady had its own concert series—five well-known soloists and orchestras came to town each year for one-night stands. Following my mother's example, I subscribed and took Alan and later Saul too. I especially recall taking Alan to an Isaac Stern concert. For Alan the high point of the evening was when Stern's violin strings kept breaking, four in one selection.

When Alan and Saul were about nine and six, a road show production of *Fiddler on the Roof* came to a summer theater near Albany. Buying four tickets was a big splurge but I thought it would be a good family treat. I wanted to sit between the boys so I could answer their questions but they rejected that. At intermission Saul admitted he was confused at first. "When they were talking about a matchmaker, I thought they meant someone who manufactured matches."

Alan loves to complain that the only movie I ever took him to was *Mary Poppins*. All three boys complained that we didn't let them watch enough television. In fact, it would have been much easier to let them watch as much TV as they wanted. However, except for the programs on PBS, I felt television was a passive and possibly negative form of entertainment...not as worthwhile as reading, using their imaginations, or simply playing with their friends. Similarly, I didn't think most of the movies were suitable and worthwhile. When I saw that *Fantasia*, Disney's first feature-length animated picture (created in the late '30s), was coming to Albany, I got a babysitter for Steve and took Alan and Saul. I drove through a downpour so violent I had to pull the car over to the side of the road at one point. The film has animated scenes set to "The Waltz of the Flowers," "The Sorcerer's Apprentice," and other classics. I appreciated it more than they did!

After a Center for the Performing Arts was developed in Saratoga—about an hour's drive away—Larry and I would go once or twice each summer to see the New York City Center Ballet and New York Philharmonic.

## Assorted health problems



**Saul, Adam, Alan, Marcus when the  
Helmans came to visit in 1968**

By the time Steve was about seven months old, I'd had a series of painful back episodes. My Dad told me to come to Chicago to see the head of orthopedics at Mount Sinai. I took Steve and Saul on an overnight train to Chicago and I checked into the hospital.<sup>3</sup> Larry and Alan came the next day by coach. Dr. Phillip Aries, whose brother Leon had set my broken leg twenty years before, put me in a plaster cast that he molded on my body while I hung from a suspended bar. After drying overnight, the cast was cut off and fitted with side buckles so I could take it off for sleeping. I lived in that cast for over six months, wearing tent-like dresses.

Saul kept getting middle-ear infections. No sooner did he get over one than he'd come down with another. The pediatrician recommended that we have his tonsils removed.

After my own and others' experiences with inept care at Ellis Hospital, we wanted to have his surgery in Albany. Saul was in first grade. He was always a stoic and this was no exception. He packed his little bag for the hospital, putting in books and homework to make sure he wouldn't fall behind or get bored. Fortunately everything went very smoothly. The first night he was home from the hospital, when I went in to check on him, he was breathing so quietly I thought he wasn't breathing at all!

When Steve was five, there was an outbreak of spinal meningitis in the area. One day he complained of a stiff neck and dizziness so I took him to the pediatrician. With the tentative diagnosis of spinal meningitis, I headed for Albany. I'll never forget the awful moment when the nurses shooed me out of the examining room so they could do a spinal tap. I wanted to stay, Steve wanted me to stay, but the nurses and doctors made me leave. As it turned out, the tap was positive and Steve had to be in the hospital for a few days. After he'd been home for a few days, he told me he was seeing "little spots." I summoned the pediatrician to the house. Dr. Waggoner checked him carefully and then said, "Steve, did you get good treatment in the hospital? Did you get lots of attention?" He assured me Steve was fine, just missing the attention we'd showered on him the week before.

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<sup>3</sup> During my overnight stay I got lots of personal attention. When I checked out I reviewed the bill and saw several long distance phone calls I was certain I had not made. I showed the bill to my Dad and he found that someone was running a scam on hospital patients! The moral is—always check your bills no matter where you are.

I was quite upset when Larry told me his routine physical had revealed signs of diabetes. He was told to cut out the sweets and lose weight. I cooperated by planning more diet-conscious meals and he used to weigh and measure his food. He lost weight and the next test was normal. The change in diet and reduced sugar came just when I was starting to have less time for baking. The boys complained that I wasn't making the usual goodies but those days were gone!

### Family ties



**Alan, Saul, and Steve with  
Aunts Nettie and Sadie 1966**

I tried to keep our small family as close to the extended family as possible. My Dad and I exchanged weekly letters. He and Trudy came every Passover and some years made another trip as well. They came the summer after we got our boat. We took them out on Lake George, and Trudy was so frightened she knelt under one of the seats covering her head with a raincoat. Bob and I wrote often. They only came to Schenectady twice during the ten years we lived there, including Alan's bar mitzvah. I was always reminding Larry to call or write his sisters and we drove to visit them several times a year.

When I was pregnant with Steve, we visited Martha and Meir to discuss names for the new baby. As had been the case with Saul, we planned to name the new baby for a woman (my mother with Saul, Larry's mother with Steve) and I wanted advice on picking a boy's name, just in case. In my first meeting with Meir, he told me the First Commandment was "Be fruitful and multiply." When I saw him after Steve was born and I had so much trouble with my back, I told him I didn't think I'd be able to meet the requirement. He assured me that I already had.

In 1966, when the boys were eight, five, and one, my great-aunts Nettie and Sadie wrote that they wanted to come for a visit. I was thrilled that they would get to see the family I'd been writing about all those years. I hadn't seen them since my honeymoon in 1957. They were so funny and old-fashioned. They told me they expected me to look "more matronly." As it had been so long since we'd been together and they were starting to get quite frail, the trip was very special to all of us. We planned it so that Alan would accompany them to Chicago, where I had set up a visit with Grandpa and Grandma.



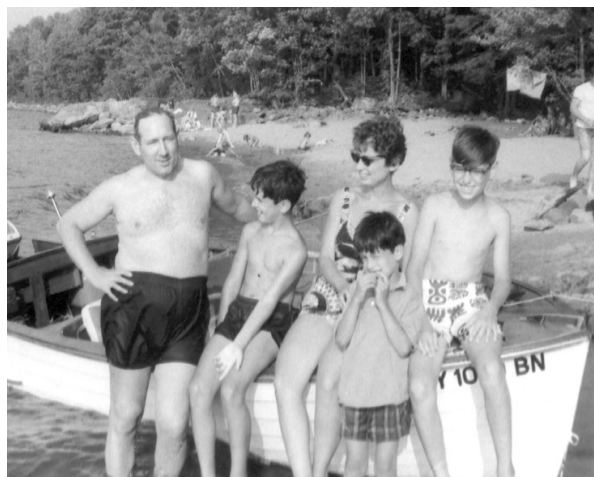
**Howard and Alan 1964**

Howard used to stop at our house on his way to Rochester and the boys used to bombard him with balls and pillows when he walked in the door. One year Howard and Zvi rode their bikes up from New York. They called me from Albany and asked if the last leg was uphill. I didn't think so, but I only traveled that way by car. (It was uphill most of the way)

One summer Bertha and Si came to visit. We took them on our boat...we'd never ridden so low in the water as when Si stepped in with his heavy camera bag loaded with equipment. I don't think he took any pictures. One year Joe and Betty came with Sue and Tom. I was aghast when they presented the boys with boxing gloves.

When Martha started teaching she decided it was time to learn to drive. Since New York drivers are so aggressive, she asked if she could come to Schenectady to get some driving experience in a less stressful environment. The chore fell to me. I'd try to be calm, but I'd find myself involuntarily bracing myself with my feet on the dashboard

Bernie used to come at least once a year, usually taking the train up on the Labor Day weekend. He enjoyed being with the boys and persisted in calling Steve "Stevie" long



**Bernie, Saul, me, Steve, Alan, 1970**



**Steve, Saul, Alan, me, Larry visiting the Ostrinskys 1970**

after we made a special effort to call him Steve. One year he brought Tom Kravit along as a treat. Tom reminded us of a loaf of white bread—very white and soft.

In 1970 when Meir Ostrinsky published his book *Sambatyon 2*, he asked me to help him publicize it. Normally, the publisher handles all promotional activity. Since this was a self-published book, he needed to generate his own publicity. He gave me an inscribed copy and asked me to do what I could. I was really impressed with his effort and still am. Just conceiving and carrying out his idea was a huge task.



Saul, Steve, and Alan try on their new tallitot 1970

As a member of the JCC board, I'd been getting a periodical on Jewish books from the Jewish Welfare Board. I submitted a book review written in the style of this publication. I was delighted to get a letter informing me the review had been accepted. The letter asked how to describe me in the credit line. This was a puzzler: I was a stay-at-home mom, writing the review as a favor to my brother-in-law. I gave it some thought and came up with "writer and educator," and that is what appeared in the "*Jewish Book Circle*." I don't know how many books were sold as a result of my effort, but I did see the book in the library of the JCC on Montrose Road and I know there's only one way the librarian could have found out the book existed.

My great uncle Dave Lapporte went to Israel for the first time in 1971 and sent us a surprise package - *tallis* and *tefillin* in velvet bags for Larry, Alan, Saul, and Steve. Although Alan was closest to Bar Mitzvah, Steve was, by far, the most excited by these gifts. He picked out the one he wanted—the all-wool *tallis*—and I took his picture as he proudly posed wearing his new *tallis*. I was touched that my Uncle Dave—actually my mother's uncle—felt so close to my boys that he sent them the same gifts as his grandsons.

One year Si Lapporte called to say he'd stop off to see us on the way to a conference nearby. I told him I'd pick him up at the airport, and he asked how I'd find him. I told him that the Albany airport had only one gate." Don't worry, I'll find you."

In 1970 Martha called to tell us that some cousins were in the first wave of Jews allowed to leave the Soviet Union. We went to New York soon after the Politchuks came and I was really thrilled to meet them. Communication was difficult, but they knew a little Hebrew so Saul spoke for us. We gave them several hundred dollars to help them

get settled. Later, when their son got married we sent him a nice wedding present; we never got a thank-you.

### **A gathering of the clan**

Alan's Bar Mitzvah in 1971 brought almost our entire family to Schenectady, which was just wonderful. As soon as we realized that we'd have a true "gathering of the clan," we started planning the weekend festivities. One of the big challenges was meeting the needs of the orthodox side of the family.

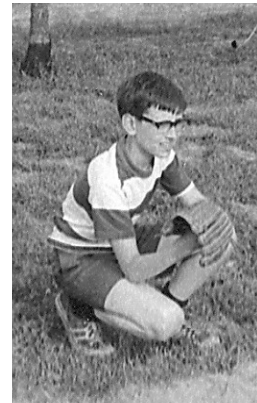
Larry had the idea of holding early Friday night services in the playroom with Saul as *ba'al tefila*. The days are long in June so they could eat at our house and easily have time to drive downtown to the motel near the synagogue. I spent weeks cooking and baking for our home hospitality. We bought extra dishes and utensils. We moved our living room furniture into the dining room for the big weekend. We served dinner for the 30 or so family members. Saturday lunch was catered by the Sisterhood at the synagogue, and Saturday evening we had a festive dinner at our house again. When we finished the "*benching*" after dinner on Saturday, my Uncle Dave said he hadn't been to a bar mitzvah like that since he left Lithuania!

One of the big surprises was that Meir Ostrinsky not only came for the bar mitzvah, he accepted the *Cohan aliyah*. This is in strong contrast to Saul's bar mitzvah (he came for the weekend but attended services at an orthodox *shul* nearby) and Steve's (he and Martha drove down on Sunday after the bar mitzvah).

Like most bar mitzvah boys, Alan complained a lot about the extra work and time involved in preparation. But despite his negative attitude, he did an outstanding job. He chanted the entire *Torah* portion, the *Haftarah*, and the *Musaf* service. We were very proud of him and, when it was all over, he felt very good about himself.



**Trudy, Aunt Rose, and my Dad visiting on our porch after Alan's Bar Mitzvah**



**Alan relaxing after his Bar Mitzvah  
June 12, 1971**

I'd spent months preparing and worrying about the details. I even made a tie for Alan—nothing in the stores seemed just right. My only regret was that I'd gotten so caught up with the logistics I didn't focus on the religious significance of the occasion. I didn't repeat that mistake when Saul's and Steve's turns came.

Bertha was so impressed with the pies I'd made for Alan's bar mitzvah dinners, she asked me to bake pies for the Friday night dinner before Howard and Eileen's wedding that August. Bertha and Si then lived in a makeshift apartment with no dining room. On this special occasion, dinner for the immediate family and us was in the kitchen. I was happy to help make this forlorn little dinner more festive.

### **Other unforgettable moments**

When David Golub rang the bell to complain that Saul had pushed him down, I tried to act contrite. Inside I was thinking: We're finally getting even for all the pushing around Alan has taken!

When I was ready to dispose of the layette and maternity clothes, I packed them up and gave them to Sadie Rosenberg, the sexton's wife, for the next rummage sale. "Don't tell anyone I'm giving these away," I cautioned her. "That's just what Mrs. Mussman said when she gave me hers," was her immediate reply. So much for confidentiality!

When we had our first conference with Alan's first grade teacher, she began by telling us how disorganized he was, how messy his writing was, and how inattentive and distractable he was. Then she opened her book to begin the formal report: "Oh, I didn't realize he was going to the top reading group...and I see he's in the top math group too. You'd never know!"

When Saul was in kindergarten at the Hillside School, he was so bored and disinterested, he looked like he wasn't ready for school. In contrast, as a first grader at



the Hebrew Academy, he was such an enthusiastic student he was reading at six weeks and soon reading with second graders by mid-term.



**Alan giving Steve a ride on the lawnmower he bought to cut our neighbors' lawns**

When our neighbors the Feigenheimers got a German shepherd puppy Joel brought him over for us to see. As he cuddled “Shtuffer,” he told me, “You know, Mrs. Kravitz, when Shtuffer grows up he’ll be strong enough to kill someone. But don’t worry—we’ll fence in our yard.” (They never did.)

We bought a used ping-pong table (advertised by a GE retiree in the GE News) and set it up in the basement. I showed Alan how to play and we played some games together. Later I heard him inviting Joel in to challenge me: “I’ll bet you can’t beat my mother!”

When Alan was twelve, he chipped his front tooth while playing basketball with Joel. He came home crying, not so much in pain, but because, “I’ll be so ugly.”

The days leading up to the Six Day War were very tense. When war broke out, there was a tremendous sense of community starting with an emergency meeting (and Israel Bond drive) at the JCC. People who previously wouldn’t talk about Israel stopped each other in stores to comment on the war’s progress and outcome.

When our cleaning lady “Mrs. Davis” (we worked together for eight years and called each other “Mrs.” the whole time) told us that while her husband was remodeling the bathroom, they had to go to the “Y” to shower and Steven asked, “Why don’t you use the other bathroom.”

One snowy day I drove Larry to the airport. There were several delays as they cleaned the runway and de-iced the plane. As we were waiting for the plane to take off, Annette Segall commented, “This reminds me, I forgot to pay the life insurance bill.”

For several years we had an Afro-American cleaning woman who was very light-complected. One day Alan came home very upset. “David Golub says Saul is as dark as a black person.” I could only answer truthfully... “He is, but so what.” During the height of the civil rights activities, Larry and I went to a benefit performance by Dick Gregory sponsored by a civil rights group. At the end of the evening, he had everyone in the

theater reach out and hold hands as we sang, “We Shall Overcome.” My cleaning lady was amazed and touched to have seen us there (I hadn’t seen her).

### **Snow country**



**Saul on  
snowshoes 1971**

Winters were long and snowy in Schenectady. The grass would be covered with snow from November through April. Larry got used ski equipment for himself, Alan, and Saul and joined a small ski club so he could take them skiing. I went to watch once and nearly froze in the warming hut. Each winter they’d make one trip to a big ski area. We also bought a big toboggan and snowshoes. In all the years we lived there, I think school was cancelled only once because of snow. For the most part, there would be a one or two hour delay while the main streets were cleaned off.

Just about every March Larry would go to the spring meeting of the American Physical Society. The meeting was usually in Washington and he’d come home in a great mood reporting that the daffodils were in bloom and the lawns were green (while our own lawn was buried in snow).

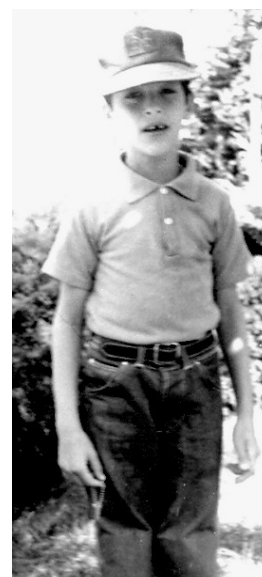
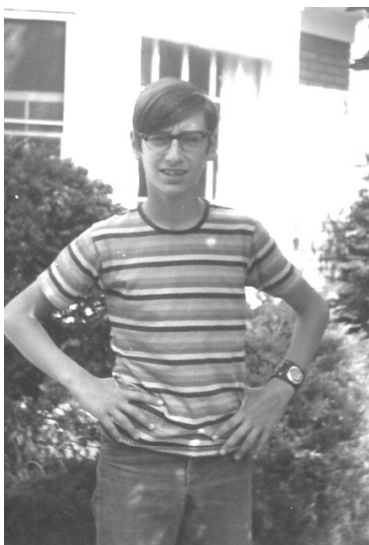
### **Time to leave Schenectady**

One day in 1973 Larry came home from work and asked, “How’d you like to live in Washington, D.C.?” He’d been offered the opportunity to work at the Air Force Office of Scientific Research on a leave of absence from the lab. We’d been in Schenectady almost ten years and in some ways both of us were ready for change.

That spring, as soon as we thought arrangements for his leave of absence and new assignment were finalized, I put our house on the market. I thought it would be depressing to be left behind with the kids when he went away to start his new job.

Our home on Cunningham Court was still my “dream house.” I was sure we could sell it without an agent and pocket the commission. I went to the library and learned that the three most important elements in selling a house were “location, location, location.” I wrote one ad for the *Jewish World* and another for the *Schenectady Gazette*, both emphasizing the convenient location.

The first few calls I got were from people who knew us: “I didn’t know you were leaving.” Although my *Jewish World* ad emphasized that the house was within walking distance to all three synagogues, we got no calls from prospective Jewish buyers. Only a few couples even came to see the house. Each time we’d go through the drill: mad



**Alan, Saul, and Steve in 1973**

cleanup while we reminded the boys to stay out of the way and off the stairs (they creaked).

There was only one woman who walked in the front door with the look that said, “This is my dream house.” Coincidentally, her name was Marge. Her husband didn’t share her enthusiasm, but he did like our 5¼ percent assumable mortgage. He gave us a very low offer and then clammed up. After a few weeks of no other customers, Larry called him and pointed out the low mortgage, the good location, and said, “If we had an agent, we’d have a deal but the price would include commission. Let’s compromise and make a deal.” It worked.

The day of our closing we walked down State Street in downtown Schenectady and it seemed we knew almost everyone we passed. We realized this would never happen again. It was the end of an era for us.

## PART VII – ROCKVILLE

We moved into 7128 Wolfree Lane at the end of August on one of the hottest days of 1973. It was hard watching the moving men as they worked all day carrying in our household belongings in such heat and humidity. Larry stayed in Rockville for a few days to help us get settled, but he couldn't stay here with us. The paperwork for his appointment to the Air Force Office of Scientific Research was not complete, so he returned to Schenectady.

Our friends Morry and Charlotte Blumenfeld invited Larry to stay with them for what we all thought would be a week or two. Instead, he became a long-distance commuter for three months, driving to Rockville for weekends of togetherness and home-improvement projects and returning to Schenectady to work at the lab. To drive back and forth he bought a used Ford Mustang – our first air-conditioned car. The Blumenfelds wouldn't accept any money for having a long-term boarder, so I started sending Larry back to Schenectady with packages of frozen kosher meat, hoping in this way to at least defray part of the cost and inconvenience of his staying with them.

Our new house was in a state of neglect, both inside and out when we bought it. Although the previous owner was supposed leave the house clean, she did not. In addition to a dirty house, her rubbish and a nonfunctioning dishwasher, she tried to leave us her cat, but I drew the line on that. Because of our moving schedule though, we had no choice but to move in on top of her dirt and begin cleaning while we began settling in. The shutters on the front were badly in need of paint and several hung on an angle because of missing nails. The kitchen cabinets had what looked like claw marks around the knobs. Nothing like our move into Cunningham Court.

I did as much as I could during the week and every weekend Larry came and worked hard getting the house in shape. Slowly the house began to feel like home. We did our own painting in those days, so progress was slow. Once while we stood outside admiring our newly painted shutters and trim, some neighbors came over and asked if we routinely bought neglected property to fix up and sell at a profit. "No," we said, "we're fixing this up because it is our home."

During the week I'd scout out what we needed for the next weekend project. One day I took the boys to Hechingers (then a large hardware/builder/housewares store) to get a prefabricated steel shed for our bikes and lawn equipment. At the store one man easily tossed the box with our new shed into the back of the station wagon. When we got home, Alan and Saul struggled, but at first they couldn't budge it. It took all their combined strength to drag it out of the car. They lacked the muscle!

Larry was like the phantom husband. He was around so little, some people doubted his existence! Some people I met promised to have us over to get better acquainted once Larry arrived for good, but by the time he was here to stay three months later, their good intentions were forgotten.

## **House and Neighborhood**

Our house had been on the market because the previous owners, the Fullers, had divorced. Evidence of their troubled marriage was apparent in the deadbolt lock she had installed on the bedroom door. In addition to the cat, Mrs. Fuller left a picnic table in the woods, which eventually became the basis for our *succah*. Over time our neighbors told us about previous residents of 7128 Wolfree, including the former wife of JFK's press secretary, Pierre Salinger.

Unlike our experience on Cunningham Court, most of the neighbors did not go out of their way to make us feel part of the community. Only Kathy Layne came over with a cake and introduced herself. We met Jean Kelso outside. She would talk and talk...usually with the smell of alcohol on her breath. Even though she acted friendly and helpful, I tried to avoid her overlong conversations. Some things she said made me uncomfortable, for example, she referred to Woodmont Country Club as "your club" and said more than once with some envy, "all you people have such lovely hair." I never knew if "you people" referred to all Jews or just the Kravitzes.

Montrose Road was just two lanes wide when we moved in and the area that is now North Farm was woodland. In those days the Old Farm Directory listed homeowners' occupations. Several names were familiar – a former football player, government officials, etc. As the years passed, the neighborhood aged and occupations became "retired" or "retired" and "homemaker."

The year after we moved in, we visited the National Arboretum to see its azalea display. Larry was inspired. He thought our woods could bloom like the Arboretum's and bought many small azalea plants, most of which have not survived. Our neighbor Connie Sullivan offered us some bamboo cuttings, which Larry planted near Montrose Road to screen out road noise. Her husband "Sully" joked that bamboo spread so fast Larry had better run back to the house or it would beat him to our yard. Unfortunately, the bamboo never got enough sun to flourish and spread, but a few hardy plants emerged from the ground every spring until Montrose Road was widened in 2008.

## **Introduction to Washington Jewry**

For our first High Holidays in Maryland we bought tickets to the early services at Beth El. Services were fine but early services started on Rosh HaShannah at something like 8 a.m. and we were back home before 11, with a long day ahead of us. It was a strange beginning to an eventful year.

Being away from our familiar congregation and friends further detracted from our holiday celebration. The Yom Kippur War was especially unsettling. There was no one to commiserate with or share news. I was glued to WTOP radio for news updates. When a previously scheduled rally for Soviet Jewry was changed to one in support of Israel, I felt I had to participate. Since I didn't know my way around yet, I called the parents of one of Saul's classmates and asked if Saul and I could go to the evening rally with them. Alan stayed home with Steve, while Saul and I rode with Jesse Ostroff and his daughter Vivian. There was a candlelight march that began near Washington Hebrew

Congregation. I worried that we were making ourselves too visible a target, but I also recall the good feeling of solace and solidarity that came from being part of such a large group with a single focus. It was a powerful experience.

In those days of heightened security, cars pulling up to *Ohr Kodesh*, where Steve attended JDS, were met by a stern armed guard. Before opening the door, the guard checked inside the car to make sure all the passengers were children. Kids were instructed not to open the car doors but to wait for the guard to open the doors and let them out.

Some weeks later, I got a notice about an AIPAC meeting. When we lived in Schenectady, I could only read about AIPAC meetings in Washington, but now I was close enough to go. After the program we were encouraged to stay and demonstrate in front of the Russian Embassy on 16<sup>th</sup> Street on behalf of the *refusedniks* – Jews who wanted to leave Russia but couldn't. It was amusing to see the embassy beef up security when confronted with a small crowd of mostly grandmotherly types – after all, who else had time for such mid-day demonstrations? That was the beginning of what developed into daily demonstrations at the embassy. Eventually, over the years, the pressure built up and in 1988 there was the huge rally on the Mall that attracted over 250,000 people from all over the country.

### **Getting established in the community**

A day or two after we moved in, I called Harriet Platt, the school secretary and real administrator at the Jewish Day School, to find out about a carpool. She told me to call Bernie Snyder, who was delighted to have someone else to share the driving. He, George Saigar, and George Liss did the morning route and my driving gave them a day off. Bernie described the route to me over the phone. I was intimidated by what he said I had to do. After 10 years of driving in Schenectady, I didn't think I'd be able to enter the Beltway on the left, cross four lanes of traffic and exit on the right at the next exit. At the Connecticut Ave. exit, I was to enter Connecticut on the right and in just one block cross four lanes to exit on the left on Jones Bridge Road. Bernie assured me the drivers would let me in – “This is the South” – and, to my surprise, they did.

At that time, JDS held classes in three locations: kindergarten and first grade at Temple Shalom, second through fifth grades at Ohr Kodesh, and junior high at the JCC. We picked the location of our house based on the assumption that I would be working and unable to drive carpools to two locations. Besides, Harriet Platt was quite sure the school would build its new home opposite the JCC. So Saul rode to school on his bike and I carpooled Steve with the Snyders, Saigars, and Lisses.

Steve came home from school the first day, pleased to report, “No one here knows Saul.” As a younger sibling myself, I could certainly identify with his need to create his own identity.

Several months later I really appreciated the advantage of carpooling with a psychiatrist when Alan fell from his bike coming home from the JCC, cutting a deep gash

in his forehead. He stumbled in the kitchen door with blood streaming down his face... very scary looking. After grabbing a towel to stop the bleeding, I called Elaine Snyder to get the name of the plastic surgeon who sewed up Jonathan's face in a recent mishap. She told me to call Dr. Chester Haverback, but warned that he had a terrible bedside manner. I called his office and was told to bring Alan to the emergency room at Suburban Hospital. Dr. Haverback asked how I got his name and, when I said from Dr. Bernie Snyder, he assumed I was Bernie's patient. He was very solicitous and acted more concerned about me than about Alan: "Get a chair for Mrs. Kravitz," he told the nurse.

In early December Larry moved to Rockville for good, and we started "*shul* shopping" in earnest. Saul would turn 13 in May so we needed to join a congregation right away to get ready for his *bar mitzvah*. We went to Har Shalom, but the cantor there played a guitar and Larry didn't like the informality of the service. We tried Beth El, but Alan and Saul didn't like the way Rabbi Scolnic asked people to turn around and greet their neighbors. B'nai Israel, then on 16<sup>th</sup> Street in Washington, had a sign up on Montrose Road ("On this site..."), and we all felt comfortable in the service. Except for Sandy Gold (whose sons were the only other kids at services) and Cantor Friedman, most of the people at B'nai Israel were not overly friendly. Still we decided to join B'nai Israel. Sandy Gold urged us to vote for the "opposition slate" he and others had organized for the upcoming election. We were amazed – in Schenectady it was hard to put together one slate because no one wanted to take on the responsibility and work.

I called the B'nai Israel office and asked the executive director, Frank Arshawsky, to send me the latest bulletin so I could learn more about the congregation. He said one month was pretty much like another and he didn't have any to send me. I asked him to send me an application for membership, since we had a *bar mitzvah* coming up. When he heard Saul's birthday was in May, he told me to schedule the *bar mitzvah* with the cantor, adding that it made no sense to join and pay a full year's dues with the fiscal year more than half over.

When I called Cantor Friedman, Mrs. Friedman asked when the *bar mitzvah* would be. She assumed I was calling in February to schedule a *bar mitzvah* for June of 1975. When I said it was for 1974, she didn't think it would be possible. It wasn't that there was a problem with open dates, but she doubted that there was enough time for preparation. I assured her Saul would be able to prepare, since he could read Hebrew fluently and knew the service.

With Larry now available to help with the "*shlepping*," we set the date for Saul's *bar mitzvah* at June 15, and Larry took on the responsibility of taking Saul to his training sessions.

### **Emergency surgery**

In January I started to feel tired all the time. I thought I had the flu. I couldn't get through the day without a rest, which is rare for me. At first I just toughed it out, forcing myself to clean the house (no cleaning lady at that time) and do the errands essential for running the household and keeping on top of our home improvement projects. As time

went on, I realized I'd better see a doctor. Elaine Snyder recommended Dr. Kotz. At first he couldn't find what the problem was. I saw him a few more times.

Then, a few weeks later Dr. Kotz called, waking me from a one of the naps I needed every day. He'd been reviewing my file at home and wanted to meet me at the office as soon as possible. He examined me and told me I needed surgery right away. For a second opinion, he had his young associate Dr. Grodin confirm the diagnosis. They said my condition was life-threatening and scheduled surgery at the Washington Hospital Center first thing the next morning.

They urged me to go straight to the hospital. I explained that I had kids coming home from school and, being a newcomer, I had no "backup." I said I'd go to the hospital after the boys and my husband came home. At home I prepared the boys' dinner (tuna salad and macaroni with cheese – something they liked). I tried to hide my despair and didn't tell them what I was facing. I kept calling Larry but he was not in his office. Finally I called the secretary and she was able to reach him at a meeting and tell him to go home.

Words cannot convey how scared and despondent I felt. I had three young sons who needed a mother, and I was frightened that I would suffer the same fate as my mother, who died at age 50 after a hysterectomy – the very surgery my new doctors said I needed. When I said goodbye to the boys, I wondered if I'd ever see them again. Larry didn't understand this feeling until 27 years later when he had heart surgery.

I was in the hospital for close to a week. A few days after I came home, my Dad surprised me by coming to visit on my birthday. He understood how traumatic the surgery was for me (and probably for him too). Larry bought me a robe (way too big) for my birthday – the first time he bought me clothes. I asked him how he judged the size and he said he had Saul try it on (!).

### **Saul's Bar Mitzvah**

With Saul's *bar mitzvah* so soon after my surgery, I knew I wouldn't be able to do as much cooking and baking for our celebration as I did for Alan's *bar mitzvah*. I made a few things myself and ordered the rest from one of the kosher caterers. Unfortunately we had a smaller family turnout – Uncle Dave, Uncle Nate, and Aunt Rose did not come, and Martha and Meir didn't attend the actual *bar mitzvah*.

The logistics were tricky. As with Alan's *bar mitzvah*, we were much concerned with making things acceptable for the Ostrinskys and Spielmans. We made hotel reservations for them at the Woodner Hotel, a few blocks from the old B'nai Israel on 16<sup>th</sup> Street in the District.



Saul read the *Torah* and *Haftorah* and led *Musaf*. I remember looking up and noticing with surprise that he was the tallest one on the *bima*. He did a beautiful job with everything and the congregation regulars were dazzled. No one could remember a *bar mitzvah* like that. Steve led the congregation for *Ashrei* and we were very proud of him, especially because at that time he tended to be shy.

Instead of coming to B'nai Israel for the bar mitzvah, Meir Ostrinsky attended services at an orthodox congregation nearby. He came to B'nai Israel for the *kiddush*, but wouldn't eat or drink anything. He was worried that someone who knew him would see him in a non-orthodox synagogue. The New York-Sharon group didn't get to our house until long after *Shabbat* ended. Not at all apologetic, they made light of the fact that we'd expected them much earlier. It was disappointing to me that we tried to be so sensitive to their needs, yet they seemed to care so little about *our* sensitivities.

### **Entering the working world**

With Saul's *bar mitzvah* behind us and my return to good health, I was ready to start looking for a job as soon as school started. Despite my recent return to graduate school at S.U.N.Y., I learned that my education credentials were too outdated to qualify for a teaching position with Montgomery County Schools. I started the depressing ritual of scouring the Help Wanted ads in the paper every day.

I was hoping to find a part-time job so I could be home when the boys came home from school. Since I had started two nursery schools, when I saw an ad for a nursery school director at the big church on Bradley Blvd and River Road, I applied. I was one of the finalists, but I did not get the job. I applied for the job of publicist/newsletter editor at the JCC, but again I didn't survive the final cut. Rejections are hard to take at any age or circumstance, but for someone trying to re-enter the workplace, rejections are especially hard to take.

I answered an ad from the American Speech and Hearing Association (ASHA) and they called me in to take an editing/proofreading test. I got a job there as a copyeditor, thanks to skills I'd learned at the *Austin Times*, my high school newspaper. This proves that you never know which skills you learn will become important.

It was not a part-time job, but ASHA had a 37½ hour week and the editorial office on Executive Blvd. was close to home. My job was to edit and format manuscripts, size illustrations, correspond with authors about proposed changes, schedule production, and prepare the quarterly *Journal of Speech and Hearing Disorders* for publication. There were four other "girls" as our boss referred to his staff, all of whom were considerably younger than me. He called us by our first names but we had to call him Mr. Kawana. In an effort to put my workplace relationships on a more formal basis, I began using my full name Marjorie.

I don't know how Mr. Kawana got his job; he certainly didn't know much about publishing. When we reviewed the "blue-lines," the last proof before publication in the days before computer typesetting, he told us not to write on them because they were used

for printing. On my first day on the job, he asked me to check the blue-line for a book he had been working on. I immediately noticed that “foreword” was misspelled as “forward.” He was very upset by my find, but it did earn me immediate respect.

Once I caught up with the backlog left by my predecessor, there wasn’t enough work to keep me busy. I asked for more work, but there was none. I started bringing in books to read at my desk, but when someone from the main office saw me reading, Mr. Kawana told me it did not look good. The only acceptable book was the University of Chicago Style Manual. For everyone who wishes for a job with nothing to do, I can only say that it is not a pleasant experience. I would much rather be busy.

My sister-in-law Martha had a master’s degree in speech pathology and worked as a speech teacher in the New York City schools. She was very impressed with my new job and wondered how I could understand the papers in the premier research journal in her field. Actually, most of the papers seemed too simple to be called research papers. Clinical studies were done with small numbers of subjects and usually ended with “more research is needed.” The authors, usually professors of speech pathology or audiology, were often poor writers, and most articles needed to be cleaned up for grammar and spelling. Most authors were grateful for the help our editorial group gave them.

There was absolutely no privacy in the office. We “girls” worked in one room and shared a single phone. Before long, we recognized the voices of each other’s most frequent callers. Everyone knew Steve’s voice and listened to me cope with his complaints about his brothers mistreating him after school. Some years later, Steve was with me when I saw a former co-worker. She smiled when I introduced Steve and she told him how glad she was that he survived.

We had no sick leave at ASHA, which meant that if you stayed home sick, the days were deducted from your 3 weeks of annual leave. As a result, people came to work in all stages of sickness, trying to preserve annual leave for vacations. One day Steve got hurt at school and the school called me to pick him up. I told Mr. Kawana that I had to leave. He started to hem and haw about taking vacation time, but I told him I was leaving and didn’t look back. He didn’t say anything about it the next day.

One morning I couldn’t start my car and I biked to work. In those days, Executive Blvd. was not connected to East Jefferson Street. I had to ride to Old Georgetown Road and then back down Executive to the last building. I got to work all sweaty with no change of clothes. Clearly, that was not an experience I wanted to repeat.

Within months our office was moved from Executive Boulevard to the main ASHA building at 9030 Old Georgetown Road, where the executive director terrorized the staff with military-style rules and regulations. There was a dress code (no slacks or strapless dresses for women!). When you got to work you had to sign in with the time. After 8:30, the receptionist drew a red line in the sign-in book and informed the boss about those who signed in late.

I started getting backaches from the secretarial-type chairs we were given and I asked if I could use my chair from our previous office. No, it wouldn't look good. I began bringing a folding chair to work. That didn't look good either. Probably worried about a lawsuit, they finally relented and let me sit in my old chair.

Between the lack of work and the repressive atmosphere, I knew I hadn't found the ideal job. In fact, I started looking for another job shortly after I started at ASHA. Once I inadvertently left my resume in the copy machine and later found it lying on my desk. I went home from work that day physically ill, but there were no repercussions.

### **My career at Aspen**

In 1976, after almost two years of working at ASHA, I got a job offer from Aspen Systems, where I was hired to edit abstracts for the National Health Planning Information Center (NHPIC). This also started out as a close-to-home position; the offices were at Twinbrook Parkway and Fisher Lane. NHPIC was run by Aspen under contract with the Department of Health and Human Services. Before I was hired, I took an editing test and was interviewed by a manager two levels above my boss. I didn't meet my boss until I reported for work, when I was surprised to see that my boss was a young man with shoulder-length blonde hair, about the same age as Alan. Most of the other employees were in their twenties as well. Aspen was informal, so at least I didn't have to call him "Mister." John started each day by giving everyone on his team a copy of the *Washington Post* crossword puzzle and we'd race to complete it. I hated being bested by these "kids" and soon I was winning my share of the daily contests. Before long I was writing abstracts as well as editing them.

Then, just as things settled into a comfortable routine, Aspen lost the contract to GE. (I never even thought of asking how long the contract had to run.) Many of us were transferred to Aspen's new contract with the Department of Justice, the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS), with offices at 20<sup>th</sup> and K Streets in downtown Washington. Some of us weren't too happy about working downtown, and we used to joke about leaving our resumes in the rest room after Aspen moved out.

I was given a big promotion and made Managing Editor of NCJRS, with my own staff of abstractors, editors, and word processors. I also had a much longer commute to work. My new status entitled me to a parking place in the building. I tried driving downtown twice, but I found it exhausting. Instead, in those pre-Metro days, I took a commuter bus from a parking lot at Montrose and the Rockville Pike. Working a 40-hour week plus having a long commute didn't relieve me of my "chief cook and bottle-washer" responsibilities at home. I'd come home from work and find the family sitting around waiting for dinner. As soon as I walked in the door, they'd ask, "What's for dinner?" I tried posting the menu on the refrigerator in the hope that someone would at least get things started, to no avail. This really used to aggravate me.

Among my varied responsibilities at NCJRS was working with police and legal specialists to develop bibliographies on a wide range of criminal justice topics. I would write or rewrite an introduction, review and re-edit the abstracts selected, and oversee

production; I was credited as co-author. If you do a search on my name in the Library of Congress database, you'll see a long list of these publications.

To my surprise, I didn't like being a manager. I had no problem taking responsibility for my own work, but getting the work done by others was more difficult. Because I worked hard all day, I resented the way some of my staff wasted time. One woman lived on the Eastern Shore and she said she had to arrive at 7am to avoid traffic problems. When I came in at 8:30, she was smoking and *kibbitzing* with my boss. So, she was at work, but not working. Another woman began each day by reading the paper over her morning coffee. Once I had to fire a young man and I lost some sleep over it, especially because he'd shown me a short story he had written about a suicidal man who resembled him. Yet, when I told him he'd have to leave, he thanked me.

Although there were several "senior writers" at NCJRS, they worked for my boss, John Katsu, not for me. I felt I was their equal and tried to get assigned as many writing projects as I could. I especially enjoyed writing promotional brochures for our products and services and collaborating with our graphic designers.

I joined an association of writers and editors who met for brownbag lunches once a month. At one session, our speaker was a marketing manager at *National Geographic*. The meeting notice suggested that we send in a sample brochure for him to critique. I was thrilled to get the most positive comments on my work. This encouraged me to steer my career from database publishing to direct mail copywriting.

One day I was concentrating on writing something – typing and retyping as I refined my ideas – when I heard a heated argument in the reception area just outside my office. I was so used to blocking out the sound of the boys arguing that I just "tuned out" and kept working. Finally as my office mates rushed from the room, they asked me how I could ignore what was happening right in front of our door: Two female clerks had gotten into an argument over a borrowed dress and they were hitting each other and pulling hair. By the time I looked up, one of the women was being wheeled out on a gurney!

Then, two developments at Aspen opened up new opportunities for me. First, our offices were relocated from K Street to Research Blvd in Rockville, where the professional publishing arm of Aspen was headquartered. At the same time, my boss was told to turn our communications unit into a profit center by providing writing and design services to other parts of the company. I showed my work to Russ Pottle and Ken Killion, the marketing managers in publishing and they started using my services almost immediately. Writing direct mail was great fun! I could make brash statements in print that I'd never say in person. Soon I had the satisfaction of learning that my copy was selling books as well as the highly paid New York freelancers. One of the authors was so pleased with the brochure I wrote for his book he brought me an expensive box of candy.

At the suggestion of Russ and Ken, my "clients" in Aspen Publishing, I began attending monthly meetings of the Direct Marketing Association of Washington (DMAW), where I learned about marketing techniques and trends. I also made good

contacts for my future freelance career. I'd force myself to speak with people I didn't know and over time I overcame my unease in social situations. Aspen paid my way to attend several direct marketing seminars too. The more I learned, the more eager I was to freelance full-time, which my Dad kept encouraging me to do. Donna Baier Stein, one of the people I met at DMAW, was already a successful freelancer and she not only encouraged me, she suggested people for me to call.

In 1983 I started "moonlighting." Saul had left home for college, so I had a room to work in, complete with a desk and bookshelf. With the help of the graphics person at the local Sir Speedy, I designed the logo for my cards, which I had printed on gold-colored stock, based on research showing that black type on yellow was the easiest to read and had the greatest recognition. Once I had cards, I was officially in business. I started sending out marketing letters and calling prospective clients.

Working all day at Aspen and then working on nights and Sundays at home was really a grind. After trying out the new computers in our word-processing center, I saw how much more productive I could be with a computer than with a typewriter. With Larry's help, I bought my first computer and started bringing some of my Aspen work home, which I convinced my boss made better use of my time, since I only had a typewriter at work.

By mid-summer, I told Russ and Ken, the book marketers, that I was thinking of quitting my job to freelance. They said, "It doesn't matter if you work in the building or not – to us you're just another freelancer." I gave notice and my boss graciously set up a going away luncheon for me. When I got to my chair at the luncheon, I saw a pile of manuscripts for three book promotions – the best going-away present I could have hoped for. After eight years at Aspen, I left the security of full-time employment with my first freelance assignments from Aspen Publishing.

I must add that during the ten years I worked full-time outside the home, I continued to make dinner every night and to prepare special meals for every *Shabbat*, *Rosh HaShannah*, *Erev Yom Kippur*, *Hanukkah*, and both *Seders*. And we always had homemade *gefilte* fish on *Rosh HaShannah* and *Pesach*. Working full-time turned Sunday into a day of work for me – laundry, cooking, etc. I might do errands on Saturday, but never laundry, cooking, or grocery shopping. During those years I also served on the board of the Jewish Day School and B'nai Israel. Looking back, I feel proud that I accepted new responsibilities without sacrificing values I thought important for me and my family.

### **Steve's Bar Mitzvah**

As we began looking forward to Steve's *bar mitzvah*, we realized this was a special milestone – our last *bar mitzvah*. I really enjoyed taking Steve shopping for his *bar mitzvah* suit because he took such pleasure trying on different outfits. No hand-me-downs, but something he picked out for himself. (I wore the same dress to all three *bar mitzvahs*) He wasn't too happy that we wanted him to chant the *Torah*, *Haftorah*, and *Musaf* as his brothers did, but he buckled down and did just about everything. There was

one long section of his *Torah* portion that is traditionally chanted very fast and we agreed that if he did everything else, Saul would read that section.

In one of those unforgettable moments, just as Cantor Kieval was calling Steve to the *Torah* as a *bar mitzvah*, Frank Arshawsky, our executive director, knelt down beside me and asked, “Mrs. Kravitz, where’s the wine?” Steve started the blessings and Frank kept insisting that the *bar mitzvah* family was supposed to provide the wine but he couldn’t find it. I finally got him to leave me alone, but he really disturbed the moment I’d been looking forward to. As expected, Steve made us proud.

The family gathering was even smaller than for Saul’s *bar mitzvah*. We were not surprised that the Lapportes and Weisses didn’t come, but we were very surprised that Martha and Meir Ostrinsky didn’t come.

On Sunday morning, after we said goodbye to all our guests and were just about to relax, the phone rang. It was Martha calling to say that they were on their way to celebrate the *bar mitzvah* with us! I wanted to say, “Please don’t come,” but I couldn’t. So they drove four hours, visited for two hours, and drove back to Brooklyn. It was strange and anti-climactic.

### **Life as a freelancer 1983–1999**

Larry was not at all pleased when I told him that I was going to quit my job. Allied was going through a reorganization and he didn’t know if his position was secure. What if neither of us had steady income? But I was eager and impatient to launch my business and went with my gut feeling that it was right. Several months later, he went to a company-provided financial planner and, when he described my income from a new business, the planner asked if I had discovered a gold mine. I had a steady stream of projects from Aspen and my marketing letters and phone calls were paying off with new clients in Washington and nationally.

I turned a checklist I had developed for my staff at Aspen into a “free gift,” which I enclosed in my sales letters to marketing managers. And once I had a few good compliments from clients, I put them on a page with my logo – since I knew that testimonials are an effective marketing tool. I went to meetings of the Direct Marketing Association of Washington and the Newsletter Association, and even made presentations on copywriting techniques at meetings several times.

One day after I finished writing a brochure, I hit the “print” button and nothing happened. I tried everything I could think of, but still couldn’t get the computer to print. In desperation, I called Saul, who was working at the Applied Physics Lab. I could hear him being called to the phone, “It’s your mother.” I told him my problem and he talked me through several solutions, one of which did the trick. A catastrophe had been averted!

Since Aspen had a good reputation in healthcare publications, my first marketing strategy was to contact other health and medical publishers. The marketing manager at F. A. Davis in Philadelphia was interested but he wanted to meet me before he’d send me

business. The next year I scheduled a pre-Thanksgiving appointment and we stayed overnight in Philadelphia on our way to the annual family party in New York. Alan told me he'd help me with medical promotions, but every time I had a medical book project he said he wasn't familiar with that specialty. Somehow, I figured out the medical stuff on my own. I called Fraser Lang, who I knew from the Newsletter Association. He had moved to Providence, Rhode Island, and set up his own publishing company, which was affiliated with Brown University. I worked for him for my entire career as a freelancer.

Once I was hired by a large ad agency to work on their AARP account. After I prepared the materials on AARP mutual funds, I suggested that they use a more legible typeface than they had in the past. I was shocked to learn that they intentionally used small sans-serif type to discourage the AARP members from reading the details. One neat thing about freelancing is that you don't have to accept every job. I didn't bother going to meet the folks at the American Trucking Association, figuring that anything they advocated was not in my best interests. But when they asked me to serve on a panel of experts judging trucking company marketing, I accepted. One very different assignment was when the Food Marketing Institute hired me to teach a new staff person how to write direct mail copy.

I learned to distinguish between amateur and professional clients: People who were publishing their first newsletter took an inordinate amount of time. Experienced marketers knew what they wanted. I was usually flattered to get projects from ad agencies, but they were without exception very frustrating and time-consuming because I had no contact with the actual client. I had to please a creative director, who had to please a supervisor, who had to please the account executive, who had to please the client. Each person had his own idea of what worked best.

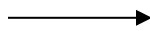
As part of my marketing strategy to keep my name before my clients and prospective clients, I regularly wrote articles for the DMAW newsletter and other marketing publications. Since such articles usually included a small photo of the author, I had a professional picture taken.



Over time, between contacts at DMAW and the Newsletter Association and my marketing letters and calls, I built a clientele that included big names like IBM, IMF, American Chemical Society, and the American Psychological Association. Although I created a number of sales letters for Dutch Mill Bulbs, a company that sold bulbs to organizations for fundraisers, most of my clients were business publishers. I discovered that interviewing subscribers was very effective in selling newsletters and I became known for getting good testimonials for my clients. Getting subscribers to talk about a publication took a lot of time, but it familiarized me with the market and the subject. I was surprised how readily people talked to me over the phone. I'll never forget how one man answered my question, "How do you use the

# The marketing piece I used to promote my business

My logo and business  
card



**Marjorie Kravitz**  
DIRECT MAIL COPY SPECIALIST  
7128 Wolfree Lane  
Rockville, MD 20852  
(301) 770-6680  
Fax (301) 770-6681



## Here's why your colleagues like working with Marjorie Kravitz...

"Marjorie is the direct mail expert. Her packages work! We have three new products to prove it."

— *Wade Martin*  
*Pasha Publications*

"Marjorie's packages have broken new ground for us. She gave one product a rebirth. On another product her package set all new records. She is thorough, careful, and creative."

— *Fraser Lang*  
*Manisses Communications*

"Working with Marjorie is a marketer's dream. Her fresh perspective and powerful copy style consistently get results. I highly recommend her to any company looking for success in direct marketing."

— *Carole J. Deck*  
*Wentworth Publishing*

"Marjorie's package pulled better than any in the McGraw-Hill group. It's still the control package three years later."

— *Tom Woodall*  
*McGraw-Hill*

"Marjorie's copy combines a clear understanding of the product, the audience, and how best to reach them... aimed to sell!"

— *Jackie Davie*  
*Congressional Quarterly*

"Marjorie often uncovers selling points we were unaware of. The extra effort she puts in always makes the sales argument clear and easy to understand."

— *James C. Mills*  
*F. A. Davis Co., Publishers*

"Our response rate doubled when she started writing our copy."

— *Debra Bass*  
*American Counseling Assoc.*

"Marjorie's copy is crisp, intelligent and to-the-point, but most of all, it's selling a lot of books."

— *Joel M. Drucker*  
*Government Information Services*

"Thanks to Marjorie's sales letter and promotional copy, our sales increased over 20% last year."

— *Albert Bos, Dutch Mill Bulbs*



newsletter?” He told me the first thing he did was make 26 copies, one for everyone on his staff, in clear violation of the copyright laws!

What I really liked about my 15 years in business was that with each project I learned about a new discipline or field of study. Before I could write a sales letter or brochure, I had to understand the content matter. It was like being paid to take graduate-level courses. I’ve written letters and brochures selling publications about law, medicine, education, physical and occupational therapy, government contracting, human resources, psychology, clinical and analytical chemistry, energy and energy regulation, residential communities, and other topics. To my great satisfaction, one brochure I wrote for IBM won a coveted MAXI award from DMAW.

I enjoyed the feeling of economic success too. My first year in business I doubled my Aspen salary. In my biggest year I made over \$80,000. Unlike many entrepreneurs, I was determined to keep my business from taking over my life. I didn’t work on Shabbat or Jewish holidays and rarely worked in the evening. If I couldn’t meet a proposed schedule, I’d negotiate a more comfortable schedule or turn down the job. I felt I gained respect as the successful owner of a small business, both in the family and in the community. It was very satisfying to buy my own cars, pay for remodeling the downstairs bath, and assume part of our fixed household costs as a business expense.

Before I started working at home, I worried that I’d gain weight, with easy access to the kitchen all day, but that was not a problem. After a brisk morning walk, I’d go down to my office and stay there. I liked being independent of bosses and hierarchies. I had to work with my clients, but my success did not depend on the quality or efficiency of someone I had no control over. Being independent also meant I could reserve time for things I considered important, like cooking for and celebrating the Jewish holidays. And I didn’t have to worry about sick leave or vacation time.

Not long after I was earning good money, I saw an article in the business section of the paper about a new type of retirement savings plan for self-employed people. After meeting with several potential plan managers, I set up a Defined Benefit Plan that enabled me to save up to 75% of my net income in my pension plan.

Once when things started looking shaky at Allied, Larry started talking about joining my business to promote technical publications. I must admit I wasn’t overjoyed at the prospect. When we do things together, he usually dominates and I liked being my own boss. Fortunately, he kept surviving the various reorganizations and the question of a joint effort never came up.

### **Surprises along the way**

When I first started out, I thought it would be great if someone else did the marketing and I just stayed home and wrote the copy. I discovered that I enjoyed meeting clients and prospective clients. And also that I was pretty good at doing my own marketing.

I was not prepared for how long it sometimes took to get paid. Some clients needed to be billed several times before they'd pay me. And then there was the one client who didn't pay at all. I was hired to launch a new newsletter on AIDS. I did my job and the client didn't pay. I sent out several bills. Then I started calling. I kept getting unsatisfactory answers. I threatened to sue and finally did file a suit in Small Claims Court for several thousand dollars. I had my day in court – cases are scheduled by the day so you really do have a full day in court, most of it sitting and waiting your turn. I got a judgment in my favor. However, I learned that getting the judgment and getting paid are two different things. After repeated attempts to collect, I turned the debt over to a collection attorney. He wrote a letter that brought in \$100, of which \$25 was his fee. This was supposed to be the first of a series of payments that never materialized. I wasted untold hours and energy trying to collect until I finally decided to drop the matter. I felt cheated, but I put the matter behind me and moved on. Later I ran into the man who kept putting me off and I learned that he'd been "stiffed" by his employer too.

Freelancing is a roller coaster type of employment. Sometimes the work pours in and you have to decide whether to add assignments to an already full schedule. Then there are slow times when it's hard to face a day with no work. Theoretically that's when you should be marketing, but it's hard to do marketing all day. As a matter of fact, someone told me that the best time to do cold calling is right after you accept a new assignment – your voice reflects your self-confidence. But when a new job comes in, you want to get right to work, not write letters and make phone calls.

In running my business, I logged my jobs in a notebook, one page per month, showing due date, hours worked, charges, and payment. Keeping track of the hours I worked on each project helped me set my fees, which I based on a hoped-for hourly rate. Over time I thought I'd see a pattern, so I could predict which months I would be busy. In practice, no two months were ever alike and there was no pattern from one year to the next. Because of the unpredictability of income from month to month, although my annual income always exceeded my salary at Aspen, it would have been hard to remain comfortable about my business if Larry didn't have a regular salary.

### **My morning commute**

When my Dad retired, he took up walking for exercise and that set a good example for me. When I started working at home, since I no longer had a morning commute, I decided to take a vigorous walk through the neighborhood every day. I suspected that I'd keep to a more regular schedule if I had a walking partner. I called my neighbor Connie Sullivan – I'd seen her walking her dog Romeo for years and Romeo had recently died. She was delighted to have some diversion. We explored the neighborhood together, rain and shine.

After a few months, Connie, 19 years my senior, felt I was walking too fast for her. She called Judy Messitte and encouraged her to become my walking partner. Judy and I walked together for a couple of years, until she decided to get a full-time job. By then we were walking two miles a day in a half-hour. She suggested that I call Lynn Chaitowitz. I walked with Lynn for a few years until I developed neuropathy in my feet.

Regardless of whether I was walking alone or with someone else, I'd leave the house at 8:15 a.m. every day it wasn't raining, snowing, or below 20° - the temperature Alan's nursery school used to determine whether the kids go outside to play. I won a Walkman in a drawing at Radio Shack and some days I'd walk to music with tempos set at a particular pace. I enjoyed my morning commute for 10 years, and only stopped because I started having problems with my feet. I felt invigorated by the fresh air and came home ready to get right to work. I still miss the morning walk and the joy of being outside. When I started walking for exercise, no one else in the neighborhood was doing it. Ten years later, I often saw people walking in the neighborhood. I'd started a trend!

### **My involvement with JDS**

During our first year in the area, Bunny Chapman, someone I'd never met, called and asked me to work with her on the JDS recruitment committee. I agreed to help out. A few weeks later, she called to say she had a family emergency and asked me to take charge of recruiting new students for both kindergarten and seventh grade entry.

Based on what I saw Leo Phaff do at the Hebrew Academy, I maintained telephone contact with prospective parents to encourage them to enroll their kids. I also set up a meeting with representatives of the Hebrew Academy and Hebrew Day Institute, proposing that we declare "Day School Education Week," and hold Open Houses at all day schools the same week. I told them we would all benefit if we could call attention to the importance of day school education. It took some doing but we agreed on an ad for the *Jewish Week* – getting the cooperation of the orthodox schools took a lot of perseverance, but they ultimately participated.

Another of my outreach activities involved making presentations to groups of prospective parents. I went to parlor meetings in outlying areas like Bowie and Gaithersburg. I showed slides Saul had taken of the kids in action and talked about the advantages of JDS. To make it easier for Bowie parents to get their kids to school, I suggested that they bring their kids to a Big Boy restaurant at New Hampshire Avenue and the Beltway, where they could meet a JDS school bus. This worked!

I thought that Shabbat services would be a nice way to showcase what JDS students could do. We planned the first JDS Shabbat at B'nai Israel in our living room, and assigned parts to the Kravitz and Gold boys, the only JDS students who came to services regularly.

My efforts caught the attention of Julie Levine and Paul Berger, the school leaders, who asked me to be on the Board of Directors. I attended countless meetings in smoke-filled rooms at Ohr Kodesh and was soon elected to be on the Executive Committee as Secretary of the Board for several years. The smoke-filled meetings inspired me to propose that we make the new school building on East Jefferson Street smoke-free. I took a lot of flak when I made my smoke-free proposal (this was in 1976, before there were any regulations about smoking in public buildings). Several smokers on the Board thought my idea was crazy. I brought in research showing the dangers of

second-hand smoke. I also questioned the example we were setting for our kids if our teachers smoked in the classroom. Some board members were sure this would force one of our best teachers to quit. When the Board finally voted, the majority voted to make the classrooms smoke-free. The teachers were told to confine their smoking to the teachers' lounge, which didn't please the nonsmoking teachers, who were in the majority. None of the teachers resigned over this matter.

I would be remiss if I didn't mention that Saul had a greater impact on the East Jefferson Street building during the planning stage. When he saw the blueprints and noticed that the gym wasn't regulation size for high school competition, he successfully petitioned Charles E. Smith to make the gym larger so the basketball team could participate in high school leagues.

When Saul was in ninth grade it was clear that most of his classmates were not planning to return to JDS for high school. This raised the question of whether JDS could really grow into a high school. We had a meeting of the parents and kids in our living room and most of the parents were unsure about continuing. It was the returning kids who pushed to become the pioneer high school class. We didn't want to jeopardize our kids' chance for a quality college education, but Saul and Mark Blumberg were very persuasive and we agreed to stay the course.

Another memorable experience was when the school hired Dr. Solomon Burak as Headmaster. When he appeared before the Board as a candidate, it was obvious to me that he was not the right person for the job. I asked for his thoughts on educating girls in our new high school. He said he had not given any thought to having girls participate in a *minyan* or studying the same subjects as the boys. I knew that he had no experience with girls in a Jewish high school, but that he had given no thought to this knowing what kind of school we had, was inexcusable. Nevertheless, he was hired.

My next encounter with Dr. Burak was over the telephone. I was working at ASHA when he called to tell me there was a problem with Steven. Was Steve hurt? No. Steve refused to take an eye exam being given to all the students. "What do you expect me to do about it?" I asked. He put Steve on the phone and Steve was adamant that he was within his rights to refuse. If the headmaster couldn't get Steve to cooperate, all he had to do was notify us that we would be responsible for getting our son's eyes examined. I wondered why he called me at work and not Larry, but I remembered that teachers always wanted to speak with me about problems at school, even in the evening when Larry answered the phone at home.

### **My Russian volunteer projects**

When the first Russian families were relocated in the area, the Federation set up a meeting to acquaint them with the various educational opportunities for their children, which Federation would subsidize. I was asked to speak for JDS. A Russian translator was there to interpret our comments to the parents. Representatives from the other schools spoke in terms of demands their schools made of parents and children. When it was my turn, I welcomed the parents warmly and told them how pleased we were to see

them. Then I told them how much the Jewish community wanted their children to have a good Jewish education. Almost all of the families chose JDS.

I saw an article in the *Jewish Week* asking people to befriend these new immigrants, since they didn't have extended family here to celebrate Jewish holidays with and probably didn't know much about Jewish traditions. I called the resettlement office and we were assigned Faina and Roman Dembin and their sons Jacob and Mischa.

I invited them for *Rosh HaShannah* dinner and they arrived so late I thought they changed their minds about coming. I kept inviting them for *Shabbat* and holidays and trying to help them. They used to run a small dry cleaning store. Roman drove a cab also. They invited us to their apartment several times and that was quite an experience. They kept bringing out more and more Russian specialties. And Roman usually offered vodka to Larry.

Shortly after Faina got her driver's license, she bumped into a car waiting to make a turn, "just a leetle touch," but the car was a police car. She was frightened when she got a summons and asked me to go with her to traffic court. When I made a short statement in Faina's behalf, the judge asked if I was a lawyer. "No, just a friend." She got off with a reprimand and small fine, but it could have been much worse.

One day Faina called and asked me to help a friend of hers. Rita Feld, another Russian immigrant, was a doctoral candidate at American University. Her thesis had been rejected as being poorly written. For months Rita came to our house one evening a week and we'd go over her thesis on the Jewish writers from Odessa. She resubmitted it and was told it was much improved but needed more polish. I realized I had been so concerned about hurting her feelings, I hadn't made enough changes. This time I edited with a firm hand and the thesis was accepted. Getting a PhD made Rita eligible for a teaching position, a steady job with good salary and benefits. She was very grateful for my help and for many years she used to send me greeting cards at *Rosh HaShannah* and *Pesach*. The last time she sent me a note, thanking me for changing her life.

A man with an Eastern European accent called and said Chuck Bernstein suggested that he contact me. Jacob Shadevitch had been Chuck's guide and translator during a visit to Lithuania, shortly before he moved to our area. Naturally I invited him and his wife over. He was a writer who knew English but not well enough to get his work accepted for publication. I edited several articles he wrote that appeared in the *Washington Jewish Week*. For months, he used to fax articles to me, which I edited and faxed back. Having articles published enabled him to get a job in the State Department.

At about the same time, Sharyn Fuchs, who used to work at the Federation, asked me to help the Gorbach family. They didn't qualify for help through the Federation because Alex Gorbach was not a refugee. He was an exchange scientist at NIH. I invited Alex and Marina Gorbach over with their two young sons Yuri and Michael. We invited them for *Shabbat* and holidays for several years and my help was very important to their lives.

Alex's year as an exchange scientist was almost over and if he didn't get asylum as a refugee, he would have to go back to Russia. He asked me to write a letter for him, requesting that his status be changed to refugee. My letter worked. Then he needed a letter explaining why his mother and aunt needed permission to leave Russia to join him as refugees. That was successful too. Then he needed money to pay for their tickets and exit taxes; I co-signed a note for \$4,000 from the Hebrew Free Loan Society with Sarah Dekelbaum. Then he wanted his mother and aunt to share an apartment at Bethany House, which has a policy prohibiting two unrelated people from sharing an apartment. Another letter and another success. When Alex needed a driving license, I took him out for a few practice sessions and then took him for his driving test.

When Alex was looking for a job, Larry helped him reshape his resume and when Marina was ready to enter the workplace as a computer programmer, I got Judy Goldberg, who worked at IBM, to help Marina with her resume. For several years I paid Marina's dues in Na'amat and took her to meetings.

The first year they were here, Steve arranged for Yuri to attend Capital Camps on full scholarship. Esther provided clothing outgrown by Jonas and Aaron. I called Shulamith Elster, then JDS Headmaster, and she arranged to get Michael into JDS kindergarten on full scholarship. Michael was not growing properly – he was six but looked like a 3-year old. I arranged to have him seen by several doctors at no cost. Unfortunately, there was nothing they could do for Michael; Alex and Marina think Michael's growth was stunted by the nuclear power accident at Chernobyl. Michael stayed at JDS through sixth grade, when the school wanted the Gorbachs, both of whom by then had good jobs, to pay more tuition. Just by coincidence I saw Alex at the JCC, and he told me Michael could not continue at JDS because they were about to buy a house on Crestview Drive, next door to Steve. They had "made it." The following year, Michael had a *bar mitzvah* at B'nai Israel, and Alex asked Larry (!) to have an *aliyah*.

### **My service to B'nai Israel**

B'nai Israel sold its property on 16<sup>th</sup> Street in 1974 and during the year of construction, our services were at the JCC. During *Simchat Torah* at the JCC, Rabbi Simon was trying to provide maximum opportunity for *aliyot*. He called out, "Is there anyone else who hasn't had an *aliyah* and wants one." I commented to the boys that "anyone" did not include me, and Alan and Saul challenged me to find out for sure. I stood up but as soon as Rabbi Simon noticed me he corrected himself, "I mean, anyone who would not require an emergency meeting of the Ritual Committee." So I quietly sat down and decided to join the Ritual Committee.

At Agudas Achim in Schenectady, we often went to programs for the "body count" ... to support our friends. I used to think it would be nice to go to synagogue services and programs anonymously, only when we felt like it. But I soon learned that unless you take an active part, you feel like an outsider. I joined the Ritual Committee and made more of an effort to get to know people in the congregation. It wasn't easy as B'nai was a rather cold congregation then. At my first Sisterhood meeting, no one came

to greet me as a newcomer, so I went around introducing myself and introducing women who were long-standing members to each other. I didn't go to another Sisterhood program for at least 20 years.

A year or two after my first try, on another *Simchat Torah*, I approached the *bima* for a group *aliyah*. The *gabbai*, Meir Freishtat, ordinarily a very jovial man, stopped me at the stairs and said quite sternly, "Mrs. Kravitz, I'm surprised at you. You should know better. Please go back and sit down." To further rub salt into the wound, the rabbi kept repeatedly inviting the men to have some celebratory refreshments after their *aliyah*.

It took time, but after some prodding, *bat mitzvah* ceremonies were moved from Friday night to Saturday morning. Then girls were allowed to read from the *Torah*. Bit by bit the barriers to women's participation came down until women began being counted in the *minyan* and receiving *aliyot*. We probably would have gotten there eventually, but I was instrumental in bringing these changes about sooner rather than later. I felt empowered by Meir Ostrinsky's comment to me years before that the only reason women were denied full participation was male chauvinism.

After serving on the Ritual Committee for a few years, I was asked to serve on the Board of Directors. A year or two later, I was elected Secretary of the Congregation and served on the Executive Committee for several years. I learned from my experience at JDS that recording the minutes lets you shape how events are interpreted and referenced, and I enjoyed being able to influence things in this way. One year, when Larry Shulman was president, he asked me to write his speech to the congregation for the evening of *Kol Nidre*. I'd "ghosted" letters but never speeches. It was strange hearing him say my words.

The clergy, especially Cantor Kieval, did not appreciate my repeated efforts to change things at B'nai Israel. At my suggestion, we rewrote the job description of the cantor to make "encourage participation of the congregation" one of his goals. This meant that the man who told me he did not leave New York to become the Mitch Miller (a popular band leader who used "sing-alongs" as part of his act) of Montrose Road was going to have his performance graded on whether he had a singing congregation.

Meanwhile, I continued on the Ritual Committee and was surprised when I was asked to become its Chair. I didn't think I was qualified, but David Levine encouraged me to accept and I did. During my 5-month tenure I tried to be an instrument of change. We had heard many complaints about *kashrut* in the kitchen, so I asked Rabbi Simon to give the committee a tour of the kitchen and explain the rules and procedures. I wanted to provide more service to the bereaved and asked for a report on this matter as well.

I think the biggest change I can take credit for is the *kiddush* on Passover. I asked Rabbi Simon why we had no congregational *kiddush* during Passover. He said it was impossible because the kitchen was closed for Passover. I suggested that all it would take would be *matza*, or fruit and macaroons, which could be served without using the kitchen, to create a holiday ambiance. Despite all the protests of what an impossible request I was making, that year and every year thereafter we had a *kiddush* after Passover

services, offering a nice opportunity to socialize after services. Although previous chairs tended to continue from administration to administration, my term ended with the congregational election. I think I made too many waves.

After years of letting others plan events, I came up with an idea to revitalize the program for *Erev Shavuot*. When I made my suggestion, I was asked to join the Adult Education Committee. Instead of merely listening to my suggestion, they asked me to chair the *Erev Shavuot* program. In 2003 I planned a dinner to precede the program and set up a new format for the learning program. It was a huge success and became the model for future years.

### **Family Relations**

**Dad and Trudy** came to visit each year for the two *Seders*. They used to stay at the Pavillion on Montrose, which had apartments for transient use. Dad used to write me regularly and we spoke on the phone. We usually went to Chicago for his birthday. After Trudy died, Dad came more frequently and stayed with us. He came for special occasions like graduations and, after Saul moved to Israel, he came whenever Saul returned for a visit. Once I got interested in family history, I tried to get more information from him, but he didn't seem to recall much. The last time he came by himself, he didn't remember that we intended to pick him up. We got to the airport and I was frantic when I couldn't find him. Fearing the worst, I had Larry check several men's rooms. We came home and he arrived by taxi shortly thereafter. On his next trip, for Talya and Elana's naming, Bob and Janet came with him.

Sometime during the '70s I realized that **Thanksgiving** was the only holiday we could celebrate with the New York relatives. I volunteered to pay for a family dinner if someone bought prepared food and made the arrangements. For a few years our party was at the Ostrinsky's house and for a few years, when our ranks were swelled by the Russian cousins, it was in the basement of Meir's *shul*. People really looked forward to being together. The Thanksgiving party went on for at least 10 years. Except for one gathering at a restaurant in New Jersey (kosher, of course), our get-togethers after that were, unfortunately, mostly for funerals and unveilings.

When my cousin **JoAnn Levin**'s oldest son was *bar mitzvah*, I flew to California. JoAnn's marriage was breaking up and I wanted to be there for her and my Aunt Rose and Uncle Nate. Several years later, when Rachel and Jenny Levin were 7 years old, my cousin Gail Weiss called and asked if she could bring them to our house for Passover so they could experience a family *Seder*. Naturally I agreed. Several days later she called back and said the boys had no school that week and they wanted to come too. Sure. Then JoAnn called and asked if she could come too. Sure. They planned to arrive the day before the first *Seder*.

Preparing for six extra people is a lot of work, but I was happy to bring the family together for the holiday. I bought a humongous pot for the chicken soup and *gefilte* fish and bought and prepared large amounts of food for the whole holiday. I knew what time their plane was due and I made lunch for them (not exactly convenient when the



household is in the pre-Passover mode). About an hour after I expected them, they called to say they'd had lunch in MacDonalds.

We had such a big crowd for the *Seder* we had to move the dining room table into the living room. While we were still eating the *Seder* meal, JoAnn left to meet some friends in Georgetown. That night I commented to Gail on JoAnn's departure...perhaps she took offense. I don't know.

The next morning - before the second *Seder* - I went for my usual walk. On my way home, I saw them driving out of Wolfree Lane. They waved. When I got home, I saw a small note. "Thank you for your hospitality. We think that 6 people is a bit much – and things would be easier all the way around if we stayed in a hotel. Thanks again. Jo and Gail." They never called to say goodbye. In fact, I didn't hear from them for years. I don't know what they told their parents, but my Aunt Rose and Uncle Nate were very cold the next time I called and remained so in the years that followed. I started out doing a good deed and ended up alienating my favorite aunt and uncle. When Uncle Nate died in 1986, I did not go to the funeral. I wasn't sure I would be welcome. After Rose had a stroke, I started writing and calling her and we resumed our warm relationship. In 2004 after her funeral, I asked JoAnn's daughters, Rachel and Jenny, if they remembered visiting me. They started ticking off the things they remembered and then commented about the nice motel they went to. I said, "I didn't know you were going to go to a motel." JoAnn said, "Some day I'll tell you what happened." So it's still a mystery.

A year or two before my **great-uncle Dave** died in 1982, I went to visit him at the Chicago nursing home he lived in following a car accident. I saw him in the dining room and was shocked to see how small and frail he looked. He brightened as soon as he saw me. During our brief visit he beckoned me down to whisper in my ear, "Margie, are you working because you have to or because you want to." I answered "both," and he nodded thoughtfully.

About two weeks before her first *Pesach* alone after Si Spielman died, I called **Bertha** and was surprised to learn that she had no plans for the holiday. Eileen and Howard went to his parents and her parents in alternate years and this was the year for them to go to her parents. I don't remember what Gail's plans were that year. But to leave their mother alone on such a family-centered holiday was beyond belief. I didn't ask Larry. Without hesitation, I invited Bertha to come to our house for Passover, and without hesitation she accepted. We had a full house. Dad and Trudy and Saul and Beri were also with us. I made a bunch of *kugles* in advance and every day at lunch I'd set out a buffet of salad and *kugle*.

For many years, **Bernie** came to visit us every Labor Day weekend. The last few years of his life were very difficult. When he could no longer maintain his own apartment, Larry and Steve went to New York to move him into a senior citizen's residence. Things went from bad to worse. He would wake up in the middle of the night in great pain or with difficulty breathing. He called 911 several times but the hospital couldn't find any reason for his difficulty. The medicine for his Parkinson's disease was

known to cause psychological problems and everyone assumed that was causing his distress. He'd wake up in a panic and call different members of the family to say goodbye. As these episodes became more frequent, Zvi and others told him not to call. I couldn't do that. At first when the phone rang, I'd pass the phone to Larry, but ultimately the phone was by my side of the bed and I was the only one who would listen sympathetically. I would urge him to take deep breaths and try to help him relax. Some nights he called several times, but I couldn't tell him not to call. It was only in his final hospitalization that a doctor discovered that much of his heart muscle was diseased. He really did have physical problems.

**Gail and Henry Gabler and Benji** came to visit every other year or so. When Benji was a baby, they wouldn't leave him play alone for a minute: "Benji, do this... look at that... show Aunt Margie how you..." One time they came for Shabbat and they went to B'nai Israel with us. During services I asked Henry why he wasn't wearing a *tallis* and he explained that he had prayed at home.

Henry died quite suddenly. He was in Manhattan for a doctor's appointment and collapsed on the sidewalk and died. The funeral was less than 24 hours later. In front of the funeral home, we were accosted by men shaking disposable aluminum baking pans, begging. We brushed past them and saw Bertha and Mrs. Gabler holding each other, overcome with sobs. When Howard drove up with Gail, she pulled me to her and asked me to stay with her when she was ushered to the office. This young widow, still in shock, was told by two religious men that she had to pay the bill in full before the funeral could begin. She wasn't prepared for this. I took the bill, asked a few questions, and made out the blank check I kept in my purse. I didn't have \$4,000 in the bank, but I knew I could transfer money in time to cover the check. I didn't know if or when Gail would repay us. (She repaid us in full some weeks later.) Benji's principal spoke and, among other things, told Benji not to have anything to do with Jews who were not Orthodox. Weeks later, when he heard that Gail was making *kiddush* on Friday night, he told Benji, then 8 years old, that he, not his mother, should be doing that.

For about six years, **Sy and Anne Lapporte** lived in the area while he worked at the National Science Foundation. I really enjoyed having cousins nearby. We socialized together a lot and became quite close. Once we took a trip to Charleston together. They eventually returned to California, and I miss them.

### **My Brother Bob**

For me, the most troubling family relationship has been with my brother. Since we used to be so close, it was hard for me to accept that I felt alienated by the man who had prided himself on being considerate. In fact in 1956, when I told Bob that Larry had proposed, he questioned whether Larry was considerate enough to be a good husband. Although Bob came to Washington quite often – at least several times a month – he only contacted me once. He called and asked us to meet him for dinner near his office. I went downtown by cab to minimize walking, as my feet were causing me great pain at that time. It took an extraordinary effort, but I made it. I always wanted to keep the door open.

Janet always seems friendly and “proper” when we are together, but I never felt the warmth I got from my other sisters-in-law. On one trip to Chicago, she met me at the Art Institute and went with me on an architectural boat tour. Although she considers herself a gourmet cook and does extensive preparation for dinner parties for friends and business associates, she rarely made the effort for us.

One time when Larry had business in Des Plaines, I went to Chicago too. Bob invited us to their house the day we arrived before going out for dinner with his family. At the appropriate time, I called their home and was surprised when there was no answer. Larry and I went out for a walk on Michigan Avenue and then Larry wanted to take a nap. He was tired from a long day working in Des Plaines and the rush hour drive to the hotel. When we got back to our room, there was a message to meet Bob at a restaurant quite a distance West of the city. Between Larry’s nap and traveling to the restaurant, we arrived late. Bob acted very angry. They had started without us. I apologized for being late, but added that it was quite a *shlep* to the restaurant. Bob responded sharply that when someone pays for your dinner, he gets to pick the place. I was tempted to turn and leave, but I decided to sit down and be quiet. I also decided I didn’t want him to treat us to dinner again if I could help it. I had brought him a framed photo of his family that I’d taken at Dad’s birthday party, but he showed no interest or gratitude. The next day I told Dad and Trudy what had happened and they were shocked that Bob would talk to me like that... and that I just accepted it without comment.

When we got a formal invitation to Bob’s 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party in 1984, I had mixed feelings about accepting. I didn’t like the way my brother had been behaving toward me, but he was still my brother. I called Janet and said we’d like to come if she would seat us with the family. (At their *bar/bat mitzvah* celebrations and Marcus’ wedding, they usually seated us with Bob’s low-ranking business associates). She told me she’d pass the message on to Bob, who was making all the arrangements for his party. She was surprised when I asked to be one of the speakers. Why should she be surprised... he only has one sibling? She called back to tell me I could speak but cautioned me not to say anything that would embarrass Bob in front of his business associates. I wrote a nice tribute, with a few gentle teases about how I’d suffered as his little sister. I bought a new dress and tried to think positively about the party. I was surprised to learn that Bob encouraged Dad, who was then 87, to come up from Florida for the event.

The party was at a private club a few blocks from our North Michigan Avenue hotel. We picked up our table assignment on the way in, and as we mingled with the family in the foyer, I’d ask for their table numbers. The only family member at our table was Dad. When the doors to the dining room were opened, I was shocked to see that our table was the only one not in the dining room proper, but out in the foyer. Bob and his mentor were at a table in the center of the room. Other members of the family were seated together, but Bob’s closest relatives – his father and sister – were out in an overflow area with some lesser business associates. I was close to tears. Again, I was tempted to leave, but didn’t. Marcus came over to greet us after we were seated and he asked if I still wanted to speak. I said I did. I don’t know how I got through my remarks without crying or commenting on how highly my brother obviously regarded me. But I

did. People complimented me on my humor – the only “light” talk of the evening. We left soon after. Dad, who had slipped and fallen on the ice earlier in the day, said to me on the way out, “I don’t understand why he invited us if it was just a business dinner.”

I can’t describe how hurt I was. Every time I thought about it, I started to cry. A day or two later, Bob called from the airport on his way to London. As it happened, he called while we were discussing our bathroom remodeling with a contractor so I couldn’t say much then. Actually I couldn’t talk to him at all because I’d started to cry. So I did something I have always regretted – I hung up on him. Later that year, we saw him and Janet in Charleston at David Menachof’s wedding. We were stiffly polite to each other. I felt more comfortable talking to his old friend from Austin, Ken Glick, than I’d felt talking with my brother for years.

I was very troubled by the whole episode. I don’t know why we were seated where we were – he apologized if my feelings were hurt but he never explained why he put us out in the hallway. Some months later I wrote him to apologize for hanging up and we resumed contact, although with some stiffness. Since that time, he has tried hard to get back in my good graces. He put our names on his holiday list for Harry & David pears and usually sends flowers on my birthday and for Passover, addressed, as all of his communications are, to “Mrs. L. C. Kravitz.”

When Dad was hit by a car in January 1998, Bob called to tell me about the accident. I said that I would fly to Chicago, but unfortunately I accepted Bob’s assurance that there was no point in coming since Dad was unconscious. Bob called daily to keep me updated on Dad’s condition. When he told me he’d given permission for brain surgery, I questioned whether it was appropriate, considering his age. Bob snapped back that he had health care power of attorney, so this was not a “committee decision.” Janet was talking about taking Dad into their home with a nurse, as she did when her sister was dying from cancer. I knew it was not what Dad wanted, and I felt helpless. I couldn’t find his living will. I felt so helpless when Bob told me he’d authorized a second operation. I called Dad’s internist, and he agreed that Dad would not have wanted this, but he had no authority to intercede.

On Saturday Alan accompanied me to Chicago to insist that they let my father die in peace. Bob met us at the airport and took us to the hospital. The doctors by then had reached the same conclusion I had reached days before – it made no sense to put a 90-year old brain-injured man through more “heroic” efforts. They assured me that he had felt no pain during the surgeries (but how do they know for sure?). They also said his was the strongest heart in the ICU. While I held Dad’s hand and said the “*Shma*,” Alan removed the life support. While I focused my attention on Dad, who continued to breathe on his own, Bob left the room to call the mortuary and the rabbi. I stayed for a while and Dad continued to breathe on his own. Bob couldn’t wait to leave. He acted as if this was just another done deal.

After Bob bought the apartment in Italy, he invited us to visit them there. In 2000, when we went to Sinai and Jerusalem, we arranged to stop in Florence on the way home.

We arrived late at night and Bob met us at the airport. When we got to his villa, he showed us around the apartment. There was a small bedroom next to the bath near the entry, but “our” room was quite a distance away – through a long hall, an even longer dining room, and a short hall. I used to get up to go to the bathroom during the night, sometimes more than once, and it looked like a very long walk in the dark. At that time, I couldn’t walk that distance barefoot without great pain, so I’d have to put on shoes. I asked if we could have the room next to the bath and Bob said sternly, “Margie, don’t start...” in a very stern and annoyed voice. I mentioned the long walk in the dark and he said he’d leave a light on. We were there for three days. Except for breakfast, we ate most meals in restaurants, with Bob picking up the check each time. Although we thanked him each time, we were uncomfortable having him pay for us again and again. On our last meal together, Larry spoke to the *maitre d’* on the way in and the check was presented to him. Bob was angry at this change in protocol and neither he nor Janet thanked us for dinner. When we said goodbye, there was a definite chill in the air.

In 2002, Bob wanted to have a family reunion. At first I didn’t want to go, but since all of our family was going, I decided we would go too. It was great seeing our kids together at the beach, but neither Bob nor his children paid much attention to Larry and me.

## **Vacations**

Our first trip from Rockville was a family trip to Colorado shortly after Saul’s *bar mitzvah* in 1974. In fact, we took some frozen *bar mitzvah* leftovers along with us in our rented camping trailer. We piggy-backed our trip on a meeting Larry had in Snowmass about the manned space program. Unlike our honeymoon camping trip, this time we stayed at private campgrounds, most of which had running water, showers, and, most important, regular toilets. We went to the Grand Tetons and other national parks. I remember a spectacular double rainbow at a campground in Montana. While Larry was at his meeting, we stayed in the conference hotel. Alan recognized one of the first astronauts on the elevator and asked him if he was scared when about to blast off into space. To Alan’s surprise, the astronaut said he was.

Once I started earning money, we felt more relaxed about spending money on vacations. Our first winter vacation was in 1976, when we went to Florida during school vacation. It was a wonderful luxury to have a complete climate change. We flew to Fort Lauderdale with Saul and Steve (Alan was in college), where Dad and Trudy were renting an apartment. We visited them, saw Cape Canaveral, and drove down Florida’s East Coast all the way to Key West. For me the high point was Key Largo, where I had my first snorkeling experience at John Pennekamp Park.

I wasn’t sure I’d have the nerve to actually snorkel because (1) I don’t like putting my face the water and (2) I couldn’t imagine going anywhere without my glasses. We signed up for the snorkeling trip and were fitted with wetsuits, masks, and fins. On the boat to the coral reef, the guide showed us how to use the mask and snorkel. Larry and Saul, the two stronger swimmers, had snorkeled in Lake George, so they paired up and Steve and I paired up. We were told we’d have an hour in the water. I was totally

fascinated with life beneath the surface. Steve and I were still snorkeling when the whistle blew – we looked up and saw that we were the last ones still in the water. The others had either gotten cold or tired and quit before the hour was up. I was hooked on snorkeling.

The following year, we took Saul and Steve to explore Florida's West Coast. Unfortunately, the weather was cold and rainy for most of the week. We had a vacation, but we didn't enjoy that climate change we'd looked forward to. We realized that the only way to be sure of mild weather was to go to the Caribbean.

On one of my lunchtime strolls on K Street, I stopped in a travel agency and picked up a brochure for charter trips to Cozumel at a surprisingly low cost. I got a guidebook for Mexico and Cozumel looked like a good spot for the four of us (Alan's vacation didn't coincide with Saul and Steve's). We picked a small hotel in the town of San Miguel, mainly for its price but also because it sounded more interesting than staying on the beach. It was a good choice. The whole social life of the town unfolded on the square under our windows. We took cabs to the beach every day and enjoyed the snorkeling and the ambiance. We returned to Cozumel several times, once with Steve, and several times just the two of us.

One thing that stands out in my memory of that first trip is the plane ride. As we boarded the flight, we noticed that the flight attendants were older and less polished than on regular commercial flights. On the trip home, we made an unscheduled stop to refuel, and there was some question about the pilot needing a credit card to buy fuel. We noticed several other irregularities too, and then, several months later, we read in the *Washington Post* that our carrier, Evergreen Airlines, was owned by the CIA.

In Larry's work for the Air Force, he went to several meetings in Europe every year and we tried to attach a week or more of vacation to some of those trips. The first one was in the summer of 1975. Steve went to Camp Airy, Saul went to visit Eileen and Howard, Alan went to a math program at the University of Chicago, and Larry and I took off for England. We spent a few days in London and then drove around the southwest part of England, visiting Stonehenge (tourists could walk right up to the stone structures then), Stratford-on-Avon, Bath, and as far west as the delightful seaside town of Lyme Regis. We used a Fodor budget book to plan our trip and stayed in bed and breakfasts.

Larry went on to his meeting and I flew home to a most unpleasant experience. Our refrigerator had broken and the stench of rotting meat was unbearable. It took me a long time to take the spoiled food out of the house. I'd rush outside with a bag of smelly food and gasp for air before forcing myself to go back for more. I washed the kitchen floor again and again, but the kitchen still smelled so bad I ate breakfast in a restaurant the next day. The spoiled food had oozed beneath the linoleum and the smell persisted despite all efforts to wash it out. Until we had a new floor installed several years later, I ate all my meals in the dining room, even when Larry was away and I ate alone.

In other years Larry's trips to Europe gave us opportunities to visit Holland (where I took a few hours to visit Aspen's parent company), France, and Spain. During winter vacations over the years we visited Puerto Vallarta, Grand Cayman, St. Martins, Bonaire, Aruba, St. Croix, and St. Johns. St. Johns remains our favorite.

Once Alan left for college, family vacations seemed to be over. I decided it would be nice to spend a long weekend together at the beach. For a few years we went to a motel on the north end of Virginia Beach – Marshalls. Then we went to Cape May for several years, staying at a large, antiquated, and semi-renovated beachfront hotel, Congress Hall. We'd fly kites, play miniature golf, and just enjoy being together. When Beri joined the family, after one year at Cape May, she requested a fresh water venue. We rented a cottage at Deep Creek Lake for several years. Then Saul and Beri left for Israel and our family vacations came to an end until 2003 when we joined our expanded family on the Outer Banks.

### **Larry's Retirement**

During the decade or so before he retired, Larry went through some very uncertain times at Allied. Each time he told me how tenuous his position was, I would revert to frugal shopping and cooking – meat-stretchers like Spanish rice, spaghetti sauce, hamburg chop suey, and meatloaf. In retrospect, it seems silly, but that's what I did.

As Larry's retirement approached in early Fall of 1996, his secretary called and invited me to a surprise party for him in Morristown, N.J. Alan, Meryl, Steve, Ben, and I drove down together. It was a wonderful occasion. Larry was truly surprised and very pleased. He was also proud to show off two of his grandchildren.

After Larry retired, we both wondered how he would spend his days. I still had my business, and one day he came home about 6 p.m. and asked, as usual, "What's for dinner?" I suggested that he make something as I was trying to finish a project. "What should I make?" The next time that happened, I lost patience and said, "I'm working and you're retired. I've been planning and preparing your meals for 39 years. Why don't you take over and give me a break." He took up the challenge and became a competent and creative cook.

At the beginning of his retirement, he had time on his hands so he used to offer to go to the post office and run other errands for me. Before long he got busy with golf, stocks, studying, teaching, and soon had very little spare time. I never realized how much pressure he was under at work, but after he retired, he became much less tense and much more fun.

It was Larry's idea to take Meryl and Ben, then two years old, on weekly outings, mostly to the zoo. He was having such a good time with them, I started thinking about retiring too. Then, when Danny turned two, he joined Ben and Meryl on the outings. When work was slow, I went along, and though my feet really hurt, I loved spending time with the kids. I'd bring my camera to document our activities and their growth. With painful feet, I no longer attended DMAW and other meetings. Even client meetings were

difficult. Instead of doing marketing as I had in previous slow spells, I decided to just let things ride. By 1997, I made it official and declared my business closed.

### Changing Status

Becoming a grandmother was the most exciting and rewarding experience I can remember. It seemed so natural...I felt I had been preparing for this new role my entire life.

Beri and Saul told us they were expecting a baby right before they moved to Israel. We wanted to be with them for the big event and planned a short vacation in Italy the week before the due date. We went to Florence and Venice and each time we came back to our hotel we checked for messages. We arrived in Israel the day before Ayelet was born. Beri looked more than ready to have a baby. She and Saul came to our hotel for dinner. Then we took a walk around the area. The next day Saul called to say she was in labor. We waited in the hotel for hours and hours before he finally called to say that the baby was born and Beri was fine. When we went to the hospital, I couldn't wait to hold **Ayelet** – what a thrill! I felt the same thrill with each grandchild.

When Beri was expecting **Nadav**, we planned a trip to Israel, hoping to be there for the delivery. In the months before the birth, I had met Heshmat Moaadel, an 82-year-old Iranian woman, on a B'nai Israel bus trip to the historic synagogues in Baltimore. We told each other about ourselves and I mentioned that I was planning to visit Israel to welcome a new grandchild. When I saw her next at B'nai Israel, she asked if she could travel to Israel with us. She had a brother, grandchildren, and an extended family that she had not seen in 17 years, because her daughter wouldn't let her travel alone. Without thinking twice, I agreed to her request.

When we got to the airport and saw how frail she was and that she had no passport, just a "laissez passé" as she was a refugee, I realized what a responsibility I had taken on. Fortunately the trip went smoothly. When we got to Israel, we picked up her luggage, but we didn't see anyone waiting to meet her. This could be a problem. She kept looking around and repeating in a forlorn voice, "Where's my family?" We weren't sure what to do because we were eager to get to Eshchar and our family. We went outside and she was immediately surrounded by at least a dozen people of all ages. They swirled around her, hugging and kissing... a very emotional scene. I felt more than rewarded by any inconvenience she had caused us, just seeing the joy of that reunion. (When she later developed mobility problems, we took Heshmat to B'nai Israel every Shabbat for several years. People who didn't know assumed she was my mother!)

As it turned out, Nadav was born the week before our long-planned arrival. In fact, we got there the day after his *briss*. My Dad was there in time to participate in the *briss* as the *Sandek*, for which we were all very grateful. During the week we were there, we took Ayelet to the pool every day. She was 27 months old and didn't remember us at all. She certainly didn't want to leave her mother and the baby to go with us. She cried every day as we left the house, but by the time we got to the pool she was fine. Every



time a plane flew over the pool, the adults at the pool looked up to make sure it was “one of ours.”

When it was time to return home, Saul drove us to the bus station in Haifa and we took a bus to the airport. Going through security, we aroused immediate suspicion when we said we had come to visit our son but arrived at the airport by bus. What kind of Jewish son would send his parents away on a public bus?! Also, we each had only a carry-on suitcase, which didn't look right for a trip of almost two weeks. We were questioned by several examiners more before we were finally allowed to board our flight.

One Friday night in 1994, after a snowstorm that left us temporarily without power, we invited Alan and Sandy to walk to our house for dinner. While we were eating, they told us that Sandy was pregnant. We were at the hospital when Meryl was born and I held her soon after her birth. When I was visiting Sandy the next day, she said the baby's first name was **Meryl**. They hadn't decided on a middle name yet but wanted one beginning with a B (for Bernie). I suggested Beth and that's Meryl's middle name.

The day after Natalie was born, we had a similar conversation. They had decided on the first name but hadn't yet picked a middle name. I thought it should be a one-syllable name and suggested Ann, which it is.

**Ben and Danny's** arrivals were very special. It was very exciting watching for Steve at the airport and greeting first Ben and then Danny. When we learned Benjamin's name, I said that we already had a Benji in the family (Benji Gabler) and that Benji was a boy's name. I thought “Ben” was more appropriate for a big man – he was tall and serious and I thought Ben suited him better. I still do.

I was in the hospital with a bad infection when **Evan** was born. Alan came to my room and woke me up with the news of Evan's birth. At first, I was too excited to go back to sleep. I started thinking of the outings we had taken with Ben, Meryl, and Danny, and then of taking the new addition along with those three. That is when I had the idea to get matching brightly-colored T-shirts for all the kids – so it would be easy to spot them on our outings.

When Saul and Beri told us they planned to move to Israel, I tried to discourage them. I said, “Wait ‘til you have a child and you'll want to share the excitement of each milestone with the family.” We visited them in Israel and they came to see us, usually at Passover. Each time we'd say goodbye to Ayelet and later Nadav, Larry and I would ask each other, “Do you think they know us?” Seven years later, when I got an e-mail from Saul that began, “Mom, you were right,” I knew immediately what he was referring to. They had decided to move back to the U.S. I later found out that before Saul told us, he had already contacted JDS to make sure there was a space for Nadav in kindergarten. Harriet Platt knew before I did!

I knew from personal experience the financial burden of sending children to a day school. But I wanted all my grandchildren to benefit from day school education. I asked

Larry if we had enough money to pay tuition for them all. He seemed stunned at my suggestion, but quickly came around to agree that it was what we should do. When Saul was in town to buy a house, we had the rest of the family for dinner. I tapped my glass and said I had an important announcement to make. I can't remember who said what, but Alan, Saul, and Steve tried to anticipate my announcement: "You're going to move." "Dad's going back to work." "Mom is pregnant"! They were all surprised and happy to hear the news that we were going to pay JDS tuition for all the grandkids. Soon I started thinking about all the children whose grandparents aren't able to or don't want to pay tuition. As a result, we endowed a scholarship fund at JDS which will be more fully funded in our wills.

When they returned from Israel in June 1997, Beri was pregnant with **Talya** and **Elana**. Although Beri still had four months to go, she looked like she could give birth right then. When she went to the hospital, we had the school bus bring Ayelet and Nadav to our house and they stayed with us for a few days. When we took them to the hospital to see the new babies, there were four of us who wanted a chance to hold them. Twins are very special in any family and ours are no exception.

Spending time with the grandchildren is one of our favorite activities. Once a week we took Meryl, Ben, and Danny to the zoo, the Nature Center, puppet shows, and other activities. During the winter, we took them to the indoor pool and helped them all learn to swim. One year we had Danny by himself. Then we had a few years taking Evan, Talya, and Elana out together. When Natalie was two, all the other kids were in school. I would take her out alone and when she was four one of her favorite activities was baking cookies. Poor Natalie never had the experience of going on outings with her cousins.

If having one grandchild opened up new joy, having nine just multiplied the joy. Seeing the cousins together – playing, lighting *Hanukkah* candles, enjoying each other – makes my happiest moments.

### **My Retirement Years**

When my Dad died, I went to the morning *minyan* at B'nai Israel for the prescribed 11 months. This showed me how important this tradition is to the grieving process and to the congregation. After I finished saying *kaddish*, I decided to keep attending the *minyan* every Monday morning. After I retired, I started going straight from B'nai Israel to the JCC Fitness Center.

At home, my first retirement project was to organize the boxes of family photos into albums. Then I wrote my family history through 1973.

I also wanted to do some worthwhile volunteer activity so I called JSSA. The volunteer coordinator suggested that I become a "**friendly visitor**" to an older woman who needed some extra attention. I started taking Kaye Marenberg out in 1997 when she was 86 and I rarely missed a Wednesday until her son moved her to Baltimore in October 2004. Although I had agreed to take her to a dutch treat lunch twice a month, she asked if we could make it every week. She was so unhappy at the Revitz House, I hated to just

bring her back after lunch. For the first few years, I'd take her to local art exhibits, Brookside Gardens, shopping for clothes, and the library. When she started having health problems, our Wednesdays were confined to doctor or dentist appointments and basic errands like grocery shopping. Ultimately, her near-blindness from macular degeneration made her very dependent on me: I took charge of paying her bills, making her phone calls, scheduling and taking her to doctors, even finding home health aides for her.

I know I made a big difference in her life. I was the one she called when she felt sick or needed help. Often she just needed someone to listen. When I started seeing her, she was estranged from her two married children. Her social worker told her to have nothing to do with her son, who had cheated her out of money from the sale of her home. I told Kaye if she wanted to see her grandchildren, she should accept her children as they are and improve relations. She continued to complain about her kids, but she resumed regular contact with them and therefore with her grandchildren. When Kaye moved to Baltimore, I felt like a huge weight had been lifted off my shoulders. A paid companion wouldn't have stayed over seven years with such a demanding person, but I felt I was doing a *mitzvah* by helping her.

I met Ben Turner at the morning *minyan*. He was saying *kaddish* for his mother when I was saying *kaddish* for my Dad. We soon realized that we were both interested in family history and genealogy. He told me he ran a **Writers' Club at the Revitz House**, where he encouraged people to write their family histories. He told me it would be a great *mitzvah* if I could help by typing up what people wrote. I agreed to help him and went to a few of the then-monthly sessions. The next year, Ben needed surgery for cancer and he asked me to keep his club going for a year during his treatment and recovery. How could I say no? So once a month I would go to the library to find something interesting to read to the participants, to inspire them before they began their writing assignment. Once Ben recovered, I resumed my role of chief typist and got much satisfaction from the participants' pleasure in having their stories recorded for future generations.

One year I volunteered as an **English tutor** for an emigrant from Latvia who lived in Bethany House. When I started working with her, she knew no English at all. Her "boyfriend" sat nearby to help me get started. The training I got was specifically geared to helping immigrants become citizens, but this woman needed basic vocabulary. I worked up lessons acting out verbs and using food ads from the newspaper. She didn't get much practice speaking English, since all her friends spoke Russian, but she did make progress. Then, several weeks in a row, she did not answer the doorbell or return my calls. I called the Federation and asked for a new student. I began tutoring Lidia, a Russian woman in 2007 and she is very grateful for the time and effort I put into helping her learn English and prepare for citizenship.

In 2003 I decided to become a **literacy tutor**. I attended training workshops and was certified as a literacy tutor. My first assignment was teaching two Korean women. I arranged to meet them at B'nai Israel twice a week. They are bright and interested in learning English and I get satisfaction from our sessions.

As always, my volunteer activities also include writing and editing. In 2000 I learned that the **Sisterhood** bulletin needed an editor. I offered to become the editor if someone else would handle the printing and mailing. I gave the newsletter a professional look and got lots of compliments on my work for the eight years I produced it. Actually, I found it fun to be in charge of the appearance of a publication, especially after years of being at the mercy of graphic designers who forget that words are meant to be read.

In **NA'AMAT** also, I write publicity and put out occasional newsletters and flyers. For several years I reluctantly chaired an annual Education Day, but for the most part my efforts focus on what I am most comfortable with.

When the **Foundation for Jewish Studies** announced a program for serious adult education in 2000, I asked Larry if he wanted to go. He declined. I signed up and was so enthusiastic, he started going the following year. For four years I went to classes every Thursday, two classes a night. It was great learning more about our heritage. In fact, even though I got a certificate for finishing the 4-year program, I continue to take courses there.

For me, **reading and learning** are recreation. When I see an interesting course or lecture, I try to go. Several of our vacations have been built around study programs, including a trip to Sinai and Israel and Cambridge University with the Foundation of Jewish Studies, several trips to the Judaic Program at Skidmore College, and several Elderhostels.

Whether anticipating a hospital stay – for the births of Alan, Saul, and Steve – or a vacation, one of the first things I do is get some books to read. Also, like my Dad, I enjoy crossword puzzles and word games like Scrabble.

All in all, I have been very fortunate. My grandparents came to America. My parents raised me in a loving, nurturing family, always encouraging me to do my best and setting strong values that shaped the person I have become. I met Larry and established a relationship of love and respect. I had three healthy, bright children. Larry's career brought us to Rockville, where I and later our sons could build meaningful careers, something we could not do in Schenectady. My sons have grown to be good friends and all three are terrific dads and successful professionals. And my life is greatly enriched by nine grandchildren who enjoy what my sons never could – close relationships with their extended family.

Looking back, I must admit that I feel pride in making and sustaining a good marriage, raising three wonderful sons, creating my own successful business, and being a constructive member of the Jewish community. From here on I realize it's going to be mostly downhill, which is a little scary, but I know my family's love and support will make a tremendous difference as I face the challenges ahead.

# Descendancy Chart

from my Maternal Grandmother's Side

**David LOPERT Rabbi**

b 1802-Lithuania

d 1839

sp: **Malka LOPERT**

b -Lithuania

**Tsemach Yankel LOPERT Rabbi, Sofer**

b 1832-Vilkomir, Lithuania

d 1908

sp: **Seitel RUBIN**

**David LAPORTE [LOPERT]**

b 1850-Birge, Lithuania

d 1925

sp: **Chaya WIDMAN**

b 1858

**Hannah LAPORTE [LOPERT]**

sp:

Hilliard

**Anna Dora (Chana) LAPORTE [LOPERT]**

b 1877-Lithuania

d 1966

sp: **Samuel ROGOFF**

b 1880

d 1936

**Isador (Irving) ROGOFF**

b 1905-Lithuania

d 1961

sp:

**Emil ROGOFF**

b 1935

**Allan ROGOFF**

b 1937

**Fred ROGOFF**

b 1939

**Jack ROGOFF**

b 1941

**Grace ROGOFF**

b 1943

**Patricia ROGOFF**

b 1946

**Carol ROGOFF**

b 1948

**Goldie ROGOFF**

b 1910-Lithuania

d 1988

sp: **Louis King STEIN**

m 1932

**Susan STEIN**

b 22 Nov 1936

d 13 Nov 1993

sp: **Merrill SCHIFFMAN**

m 27 Mar 1957

**Sari SCHIFFMAN**

**Penny SCHIFFMAN**

**sp: Joel FIELDS**

**Rachel FIELDS**

**Joshua FIELDS**

**Amy FIELDS**

**Jimmy SCHIFFMAN**

**sp: Reena**

**Samantha SCHIFFMAN**

**Emily SCHIFFMAN**

**Zachary Scott SCHIFFMAN**

**Frieda ROGOFF**

b 1907-Lithuania

d 1982

**sp: Elmer KAY**

**Sandra Lois KAY**

b 18 Dec 1934-Chicago, Illinois

d 19 Feb 1986

**sp: Marvin Barney SCHUMER**

b 13 Dec 1932

m 26 Dec 1954

**Ellen Joy SCHUMER**

b 17 May 1957-Chicago

**sp:**

**Sauna Nicole SCHUMER**

b 11 Feb 1984-Chicago, Illinois

**Isiah PRAYER**

b 14 Jul 1995-Chicago, Illinois

**David Jay SCHUMER**

b 14 Jul 1958

**sp: Nancy Robin SOBEL**

m 24 Aug 1980

**Alison Faye SCHUMER**

b 29 Dec 1984

**Stephan Michael SCHUMER**

b 3 Jun 1987

**Cara Eileen SCHUMER**

b 26 Jul 1963-Niles, Illinois

**sp: Stephen Scott PETERSON**

m 3 Jul 1986-Highland Park, Illinois

**Samantha Lee PETERSON**

b 9 Aug 1988-Madison, Wisconsin

**Gabriel Aaron PETERSON**

b 1 Oct 1992-Nampa, Idaho

**Henry Grant PETERSON**

b 12 Aug 1997-Visalia, California

**Ronald KAY**

b 6 Jul 1929

**sp: Barbara FUCHS**

**Robin KAY**

b 27 Dec 1959

**sp: Hal ANTHONY**



**Aaron David KAY-ANTHONY**

**Evan KAY**

b 13 Mar 1964

**Rose ROGOFF**

b 8 Apr 1915-Chicago, Illinois

**sp: Adolph BRICKMAN**

m 18 Jan 1942

**Sharon BRICKMAN**

b 24 Sep 1947

**sp: Harold LONDON**

m 22 Dec 1972

**Andrea LONDON**

b 24 Jul 1977

**Sadie Nechama LAPORTE**

b 15 Jan 1894-Birzai, Lithuania

d 23 Jul 1972-NYC

**sp: Harry LINFIELD PhD, D.D.**

b 30 Nov 1888-Birzai, Lithuania

m 1916-Chicago, IL

d 23 Nov 1978-NYC

**Hadassah LINFIELD**

b 30 Jan 1932-NYC

**sp: Allen WEINGARTEN PhD**

b 4 Mar 1932-Wilkes Barre, PA

m 23 Mar 1952-NYC

**Jessica WEINGARTEN**

b 5 Sep 1956-NYC

**Joel WEINGARTEN**

b 6 Oct 1959-NYC

**sp: Adrienne LIPP**

m 6 Oct 1959-NYC

**Benjamin Hirsch WEINGARTEN**

b 13 Jun 1988

**Noah WEINGARTEN**

b 18 Jan 1992

**Seymour LINFIELD**

b 21 Jun 1917-Columbus, Ohio

d 31 Aug 1997

**sp: Miriam PANGER**

m 6 Oct 1940-NYC

**Judith Leah LINFIELD**

**Michael Paul LINFIELD JD, Judge**

b 9 Jan 1951-NYC

**sp: Yarmila LUPTAK**

m 26 Mar 1982-Czechoslovakia

**sp: Ann Marie Elizabeth BRACO**

m 11 Oct 1991-Santa Monica, CA

**Elizabeth Ann LINFIELD**

b 14 Nov 1993-Los Angeles, CA

**sp: Dorothy RODMAN**

b 12 Apr 1919

m 1955

**Jordan LINFIELD**  
b 17 Sep 1923-NYC

**sp: Trudy CHAP**  
m 1 Feb 1948-Washington, DC

**Deborah Rachel LINFIELD**  
b 14 Nov 1953-NYC  
d 3 Jun 1992-NYC

**Susan LINFIELD**  
b 19 Dec 1955-NYC

**David LINFIELD PhD**  
b 1928-NYC

**sp: Esther ADLER**  
b 31 Mar 1929-NYC  
m 9 Apr 1960-NYC

**Seth LINFIELD JD**  
b 1 May 1961-Queens, NY

**sp: Deana MAY**  
b 1 Dec 1961-Trenton, NJ  
m 1 Dec 1985-Tulsa, OK

**Rebecca Yaffa LINFIELD**  
b 19 Feb 1990-Mishawaka, IN

**Noah Herschel LINFIELD**  
b 3 Apr 1991-South Bend, IN

**Debra Tamar LINFIELD**  
b 8 Jun 1993-South Bend, IN

**Joseph Brian LINFIELD**  
b 12 Mar 1996-South Bend, IN

**Rachel Hannah LINFIELD**  
b 22 Jul 1997-South Bend, IN

**Leah Hadassah LINFIELD**  
b 22 Apr 1999-South Bend, IN

**Jeremy Tzemach LINFIELD**  
b 5 Jan 2002

**Jed LINFIELD**  
b 27 Aug 1962

**sp: Feygah MEHLMAN**  
b 1969-Washington, DC  
m 16 Jun 1991-Baltimore, MD

**Mordechai LINFIELD**  
b 19 Feb 1994

**Moshe LINFIELD**  
b 17 Jul 1995

**Tsivia LINFIELD**  
b 24 Jul 1997

**Avraham LINFIELD**  
b 11 Aug 1999

**Shoshanna LINFIELD**  
b 2 Mar 2001

**Gavriela LINFIELD**  
b 26 Jan 2003

**Nechama LINFIELD**  
b 23 Oct 2004



**Bryce James LINFIELD**  
b 14 Mar 1969-Brooklyn, NY

**Morris [Moshe] LAPORTE [LOPERT]**  
b 1881-Birge, Lithuania  
d 1958-Chicago

**sp: Mary WIDMAN**  
b 1885-Birge, Lithuania  
d 1968-Chicago

**Jeannette Grace LAPORT**  
b 25 Nov 1910-Chicago (at home)  
d 14 Nov 1997-Silver Spring, MD

**sp: Irving Leon SRAGOW**  
b 8 May 1910  
m 9 Aug 1936  
d 2 Nov 2000-Rockville, MD

**Daniel Ethan SRAGOW**  
b 25 Jul 1938-Virginia

**sp: Sarita Rochelle SYDNEY**  
b 24 Jun 1942-Baltimore  
m 11 Aug 1963

**Murray (Moshe) Laurence SRAGOW Rabbi**  
b 16 Sep 1964-Washington, DC

**sp: Linda WAGSHUL**  
b 10 Aug 1965  
m 27 Jun 1987

**Shira Leah SRAGOW**  
b 9 Sep 1988

**Miriam Sara SRAGOW**  
b 6 May 1990

**Gavriel SRAGOW**  
b 30 Dec 1994

**Allen Philip SRAGOW**  
b 12 Jul 1967

**sp: Stacy ALEVY**  
m 1 Oct 1995-Los Angeles

**Noah Ohr Dovid Alevy SRAGOW**  
b 13 Aug 1996

**Atara Nina Leah Alevy SRAGOW**  
b 2 Mar 1998

**Nathan Yisroel Leib SRAGOW**  
b 2001

**Howard Michael SRAGOW**  
b 16 Oct 1968

**sp: Holly KUTIN**  
b 17 Nov 1966  
m 16 Oct 1991

**Aliza Eve SRAGOW**

**Tamara SRAGOW**  
b -2004

**Ruth LaPorte SRAGOW**  
b 2 May 1943-Richmond, VA

**sp: Henry NEWHOUSE**  
b 20 Dec 1937-Tel Aviv, Palestine  
m 30 Aug 1970

**Joseph David NEWHOUSE**  
b 9 Jul 1974-Georgetown Hosp., DC  
d 12 Feb 2005-Ann Arbor, Michigan

**Florence LAPORTE**  
b 29 Jun 1913-Chicago, IL  
d 30 Jun 1962-Washington Hosp.Ctr

sp: **Arnold NESTEL**  
b 1915

**Lee NESTEL**  
b 24 Oct 1951-Washington, DC  
d 1982-Houston, TX

**Sadie LAPORTE**  
b 10 Nov 1914

sp: **Harry YEIDEL**

**David YEIDEL**  
b Apr 1939-Chicago

**Louis YEIDEL**  
b 1944-Chicago

**Joshua YEIDEL**

**Harriet YEIDEL**  
b 1952-Chicago

sp: **Stephen LIEBOWITZ**

**Edith LAPORTE**  
b 20 Jan 1920-Lying-In Hosp., Chicago

sp: **Seymour KATCOFF**  
b 19 Aug 1918-Lying-in Hosp., Chicago  
d 17 Oct 1999

**Joel KATCOFF**  
b 6 Jun 1955

sp: **Fredda GOLDSMITH**  
b 19 Jun 1958  
m 3 Aug 1980-Temple Israel, Great Neck, NY

**Rebecca KATCOFF**  
b 25 Aug 1984-New York Hospital  
d 1996

**Elizabeth KATCOFF**  
b 22 Apr 1986-Columbia-Presby.NYC

**Esther KATCOFF**  
b 2 Feb 1988-Columbia-Presby., NYC

**Hannah KATCOFF**  
b 23 Apr 1990-Columbia-Presby., NYC

**Don KATCOFF**  
b 8 Jul 1953-Bayshore, Long Island

sp: **Donna KATCOFF**  
b 13 Aug 1952-Dallas, TX  
m 17 Aug 1975-Dallas, TX

**Adina KATCOFF**  
b 29 May 1991-Texas

**Doron Nataniel KATCOFF**  
b Jun 1995-Texas

**Peshe LAPORTE**

sp: **Louis LIEBERMAN**

**Frieda Lieberman SILVERMAN**



**Sadie Lieberman REIN**

**sp: Joseph REIN**

**Barbara REIN**

**Irwin REIN**

**Rodelle LIEBERMAN**

**Molly LAPORTE**

**sp: Dave KAPLAN**

**Dorothy KAPLAN**

**Irene KAPLAN**

**Mitch KAPLAN**

**Reuven Aharon LAPPORTE Rabbi, sofer**

b 1856-Lithuania

d 1932-Chicago

**sp: Gittel Agan LOPIKAS**

b 1857-Anikst, Lithuania

m -Lithuania

d 31 Oct 1933-Chicago

**Mollie Rebecca [Rivka Malka] LAPPORTE**

b 1886-Annikst, Lithuania

d 1 Nov 1915-Waldheim Cemetery, Chicago, IL

**sp: Abraham Joseph WEISS**

b 15 Oct 1881-Walamichova, Austria

m 11 Jun 1905-Chicago, IL

d 1941-Arizona

**Ester Sarah WEISS**

b 15 Jan 1907-South Chicago, IL

d 30 Mar 1956-Mount Sinai Hosp, Chicago IL

**sp: Nathan Woltzer HELMAN Nachum**

b 15 Nov 1907-Chicago, IL

m 1931-Anshe Emet Cong., Chicago, IL

d 17 Jan 1998-Chicago, IL

**Robert Alan [Reuven Aharon] HELMAN**

b 27 Jan 1934-Mt. Sinai Hosp., Chicago, IL

**sp: Janet WILLIAMS**

b 11 Dec 1934-Des Moines, Ia

m 13 Sep 1958-Des Moines, IA

**Marcus Ellison HELMAN**

b 20 Jun 1960-Chicago, IL

**sp: Karen SMITH**

b -Atlanta, GA

m 10 Nov 1990-Atlanta, GA

**Benjamin Eli SMITH-HELMAN**

b Aug 1993-Detroit, MI

**Bailey Shoshana SMITH-HELMAN**

b 6 Jun 1997-Huntington Woods, MI

**Adam Jacob HELMAN**

b 25 Jan 1963-Chicago

**Sarah Esther HELMAN**

b 30 Apr 1966-Chicago, IL

**Marjorie Ruth HELMAN Malka Rivka**

b 26 Mar 1937-Mount Sinai Hosp, Chicago, IL

**sp: Lawrence Charles KRAVITZ PhD, Aryeh**  
b 27 Jul 1932-Lincoln Hospital, Bronx, NY  
m 9 Jun 1957-Cong. Rodfei Zedek, Chicago, IL

**Alan KRAVITZ MD, Aharon Benjamin**  
b 9 Jul 1958-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston, Mass

**sp: Sandra Debby KRESCH Sara Dvora**  
b 29 May 1961-Sinai Hospital, Detroit, MI  
m 26 May 1991-B, Mich

**Meryl Beth KRAVITZ Meira Brocha**  
b 5 Oct 1994-Shady Grove Hosp., Rockville, MD

**Evan Samuel David KRAVITZ Yitzchak**  
b 8 Jul 1997-Shady Grove Hospital, MD

**Natalie Anne KRAVITZ Nechama**  
b 14 May 1999-Shady Grove Hosp, MD

**Saul Abram KRAVITZ PhD, Shaul Avraham**  
b 20 May 1961-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston MA

**sp: Beryl Ann (Batya) ROTHSTEIN**  
b 1 May 1964-Pittsburgh, PA  
m 11 Aug 1985-Bnai Emenah Syn., Pa

**Ayelet Hadas KRAVITZ**  
b 4 May 1990-Haifa, Israel

**Nadav Meir KRAVITZ**  
b 5 Aug 1992-Haifa, Israel

**Talya Sarah KRAVITZ**  
b 31 Oct 1997-S, MD

**Elana Miriam KRAVITZ**  
b 31 Oct 1997-S, MD

**Steven Jacob KRAVITZ Zvi Jacob**  
b 16 May 1965-Ellis Hosp.Schenectady NY

**sp: Esther KALEKO SIEGEL**  
b 19 Sep 1947-Chicago, IL  
m 11 Jun 1995-Cong.Beth El, Bethesda, MD

**Benjamin Kaleko (Baruch Natan) KRAVITZ**  
b 28 Jun 1994-Yekaterinburg, Russia

**Daniel Kaleko (Daniel Shimon) KRAVITZ**  
b 6 Nov 1995-Yekaterinburg, Russia

**Nathan J. WEISS**  
b 27 Oct 1910-Chicago, IL  
d 26 Nov 1986-San Francisco, CA

**sp: Rose HELLER**  
b 1 Mar 1915-Terra Haute, IN  
m Aug 1937-Chicago  
d 19 Jul 2004-Concord, CA

**JoAnn WEISS**  
b 6 Apr 1942-Mount Sinai Hosp., Chicago, Il

**sp: Barry LEVIN**  
m -Chicago, Ill  
d Jul 2005

**Daniel Todd (Daniel Tzvi) LEVIN**  
b 21 Mar 1969-San Francisco, CA

**sp: Elana LAGERQUIST**  
m 6 Jul 2001-California

**Kaya Marina LEVIN**  
b 23 Dec 2002-San Francisco



**Michael (Melech) LEVIN**

b 11 Oct 1967-Chicago

**Rachel Suzanne (Rachel Shoshanna) LEVIN**

b 25 Oct 1974-Lake Forest, IL

**Jennifer Leigh (Chana Leah) LEVIN**

b 25 Oct 1974-Lake Forest, IL

**Gail Adrienne (Gittel Agan) WEISS**

b 1945-Mt. Sinai Hosp., Chicago

**Nettie LAPPORTE**

b 10 Dec 1890-Lithuania

d Jun 1969-Los Angeles

**Edward LAPPORTE**

b 1890-Lithuania

d 1935-Chicago

**sp: Irene ROSENBERG**

**Jerome LAPPORTE**

b 1927-Chicago

**sp: Carol GURWELL**

b 1929-Des Moines

**Douglas LAPPORTE**

b 1960-Los Angeles

**sp: Kathleen ROWE**

b 1960-Kentucky

**Erik LAPPORTE**

b 1993

**Allison LAPPORTE**

b 1996

**Diane LAPPORTE**

b 1962-Los Angeles

**sp: James CURRIDEN**

b 1959-San Diego

**Tracy CURRIDEN**

b 1987

**Brent CURRIDEN**

b 1990

**Jennifer CURRIDEN**

b 1993

**Deborah LAPPORTE**

b 1958-Los Angeles

**sp: David JOHNSON**

b 1958

**Corey JOHNSON**

b 1985

**Kelsey JOHNSON**

b 1985

**Samantha JOHNSON**

b 1989

**Robert LAPPORTE**

b 20 Aug 1931

d Mar 1976-CA

**sp: Sandy LAPPORTE**

**Edward George LAPPORTE**

sp: Lijuan MA  
m 2 Nov 2003-California

Aaron Robert LAPORTE  
b 23 Oct 2005

Cynthia LAPORTE

David Nathan LAPORTE  
b 14 Mar 1893-Lithuania  
d 13 Sep 1982-Chicago

sp: Reva [Rifka] [Bielestotsky] BROWN  
b 20 Nov 1889-Bielestock, Poland  
m 30 Aug 1925-Chicago  
d 26 Sep 1969-Chicago

Allen [Alexander] LAPORTE  
b 4 Jul 1926

sp: Betty LAMBERT

Sharon LAPORTE

Ronald LAPORTE

Jill LAPORTE

Robert LAPORTE

sp: Doris KURTZ

Esther LAPORTE  
b 11 Mar 1928  
d Oct 1982-Chicago

sp: Sheldon MOSS

Linda MOSS  
b -Chicago

Lisa Beth MOSS  
b -Chicago

sp: Jim TUCKER

Emily [Esther] Janna TUCKER  
b 29 Mar 1992

Paul [Pinchas] MOSS  
b 1957-Chicago

sp: Patricia HARTMAN

Noah MOSS  
b 4 Apr 1987-Chicago

Joshua MOSS  
b 20 Apr 1989

Seymour [Tsemach Yankel] LAPORTE  
b 26 Mar 1930-Chicago

sp: Anne FRANKEL  
b 27 Apr 1928-Singapore  
m 15 Nov 1964-San Francisco, CA

Daniel LAPORTE  
b 3 Dec 1965-California

sp: Laporre JULEEN  
b 1967  
m 11 May 1996

Lydia Eve LAPORTE  
b 27 Jul 1997-Walnut Creek, CA

Abigail LAPORTE  
b 26 Jun 2001

**Michael LAPPORTE**  
b 22 May 1967-California

**sp: Rachel STAIRMAN**  
b 1968  
m 2 May 1998-Denver, Co

**Jack LAPPORTE**  
b Nov 1998-Denver, CO

**Lauren LAPPORTE**  
b 26 Aug 2001

**Elizabeth LAPPORTE**  
b 26 Aug 2001

**Sadie [Sheitel] LAPPORTE**  
b 15 Jan 1895-Annikst, Lithuania  
d Jul 1969-Los Angeles, CA

**sp: Abe BERNSTEIN**

**Isaac LAPPORTE [LOPERT]**  
b 1865  
d 1890

**Rose [Pesha Raiza] LAPPORTE [LOPERT]**  
b 1873  
d 1929

**sp: Joseph BARON**  
b 1876  
m 1902  
d 1919

**David BARON**  
b 15 Nov 1905  
d 8 Dec 1995

**sp: Sadelle ROSEN**  
m 1933  
d Dec 2003-Chicago

**Joseph BARON**  
b 1938

**Rachel BARON**  
b 1941

**sp: Harold ZUKERMAN**

**Michael ZUKERMAN**

**Daniel ZUKERMAN**  
b 1976

**Hannah Baron BURDICK**

**Hannah LAPPORTE [LOPERT]**  
b 1875  
d 1942

**Eliahu LOPERT**

**Velvel LOPERT**



# Descendancy Chart *from my Maternal Grandmother's side*

**Seitel RUBIN**

sp: Eliahu SUESS  
b -Wilkomir

**Chayim Benjamin SUSMAN [SUESS]**

sp: Kaley Rabinowitz SUSMAN  
b -Kiedan, Lithuania

**Lena Susman WALLERSTEIN**

**Rebecca Susman BERNSTEIN**

sp: Charles Bernard BERNSTEIN  
b -South Chicago

**Ida Bernstein EDELSON**

sp: George EDELSON

**Marshall EDELSON**

**Charles Bernard EDELSON**

**Kalman BERNSTEIN**

**Norman BERNSTEIN**

sp: Adele Shore BERNSTEIN

**Charles BERNSTEIN**  
b 24 Jun 1941

sp: Roberta Lesner BERNSTEIN

**Edward Charles BERNSTEIN**  
b 24 May 1971-Chicago

sp: ARIELA  
m 19 Aug 1998-Westchester Cty, NY

**Louis Charles BERNSTEIN**  
b 3 Jun 1975-Chicago

**Henry Jacob BERNSTEIN**  
b 3 Jan 1982-Chicago

**Barbara Ann Bernstein LOW**  
b 1945

sp: Stephen Richard LOW

**Rebecca Ann LOW**

**Sidney Morris BERNSTEIN**

**Edward SUSMAN [SUESS]**

**Sara Susman GOLUB**

sp: Samuel GOLUB M.D.

**Leon GOLUB**

sp: **Z LAPORTE [LOPERT] Rabbi, Sofer**  
b 1832-Valkomir, Lithuania  
d 1908

**David LAPORTE [LOPERT]**  
b 1850-Birge, Lithuania  
d 1925



sp: Chaya WIDMAN

Peshe Laporte LIEBERMAN

sp: Louis LIEBERMAN

Frieda Lieberman SILVERMAN

Sadie Lieberman REIN

sp: Joseph REIN

Barbara REIN

Irwin REIN

Rodelle LIEBERMAN

Molly Laporte KAPLAN

sp: Dave KAPLAN

Dorothy KAPLAN

Irene KAPLAN

Mitch KAPLAN

Chana Laporte ROGOFF

sp:

Goldie ROGOFF

Frieda ROGOFF

Rose ROGOFF

Anna Dora LAPORTE [LOPERT]

b 1877

d 1936

sp: Samuel ROGOFF

b 1880

d 1936

Morris [Moshe] LAPORTE [LOPERT]

b 1881-Birge, Lithuania

d 1958-Chicago

sp: Mary LAPORTE

b 1885-Birge, Lithuania

d 1968-Chicago

Jeannette Grace LAPORT

b 25 Nov 1910-Chicago (at home)

d 14 Nov 1997-Silver Spring, MD

sp: Irving Leon SRAGOW

b 8 May 1910

m 9 Aug 1936

Daniel Ethan SRAGOW

b 25 Jul 1938-Virginia

sp: Sarita Rochelle Sydney SRAGOW

b 24 Jun 1942-Baltimore

m 11 Aug 1963

Murray (Moshe) Laurence SRAGOW Rabbi

b 16 Sep 1964-Washington, DC

**sp: Linda WAGSHUL**

b 10 Aug 1965

m 27 Jun 1987

**Shira Leah SRAGOW**

b 9 Sep 1988

**Miriam Sara SRAGOW**

b 6 May 1990

**Gavriel SRAGOW**

b 30 Dec 1994

**Allen Philip SRAGOW**

b 12 Jul 1967

**sp: Stacy Alevy SRAGOW**

m 1 Oct 1995-Los Angeles

**Noah Ohr Dovid Alevy SRAGOW**

b 13 Aug 1996

**Atara Nina Leah Alevy SRAGOW**

b 2 Mar 1998

**Howard Michael SRAGOW**

b 16 Oct 1968

**sp: Holly Kutin SRAGOW**

b 17 Nov 1966

m 16 Oct 1991

**Aliza Eve SRAGOW**

**Ruth LaPorte SRAGOW**

b 2 May 1943-Richmond, VA

**sp: Henry NEWHOUSE**

b 20 Dec 1937-Tel Aviv, Palestine

m 30 Aug 1970

**Joseph David NEWHOUSE**

b 9 Jul 1974-Georgetown Hosp., Washington, DC

**Florence LaPorte NESTEL**

b 29 Jun 1913-Chicago, IL

d 30 Jun 1962-Washington Hosp. Ctr

**sp: Arnold NESTEL**

b 1915

**Lee NESTEL**

b 24 Oct 1951-Washington, DC

d 1982-Houston, TX

**Sadie LaPorte YEIDEL**

b 10 Nov 1914

**sp: Harry YEIDEL**

**David YEIDEL**

b Apr 1939-Chicago

**Louis YEIDEL**

b 1944-Chicago

**Joshua YEIDEL**

**Harriet Yeidel LIEBOWITZ**

b 1952-Chicago



**Edith LAPORTE**

b 20 Jan 1920-Lying-In Hosp., Chicago

**sp: Seymour KATCOFF**

b 19 Aug 1918-Lying-in Hosp., Chicago

**Joel KATCOFF**

b 6 Jun 1955

**sp: Fredda GOLDSMITH**

b 19 Jun 1958

m 3 Aug 1980-Temple Israel, Great Neck, NY

**Rebecca KATCOFF**

b 25 Aug 1984-New York Hospital

d 1996

**Elizabeth KATCOFF**

b 22 Apr 1986-Columbia-Presby. NYC

**Esther KATCOFF**

b 2 Feb 1988-Columbia-Presby., NYC

**Hannah KATCOFF**

b 23 Apr 1990-Columbia-Presby., NYC

**Don KATCOFF**

b 8 Jul 1953-Bayshore, Long Island

**sp: Donna KATCOFF**

b 13 Aug 1952-Dallas, TX

m 17 Aug 1975-Dallas, TX

**Adina KATCOFF**

b 29 May 1991-Texas

**Doron Nataniel KATCOFF**

b Jun 1995-Texas

**Sadie Laporte LINFIELD**

**sp: Harry LINFIELD PhD, D.D.**

**Hadassah LINFIELD**

**Seymour LINFIELD**

**Jordan LINFIELD**

**David LINFIELD**

**Reuven Aharon LAPPORTE Rabbi, sofer**

b 1856-Lithuania

d 1932-Chicago

**sp: Gittel Agan LOPIKAS**

b 1857-Anikst, Lithuania

m -Lithuania

d 31 Oct 1933-Chicago

**Mollie Rebecca [Rivka Malka] LAPPORTE**

b 1886-Annikst, Lithuania

d 1 Nov 1915-Waldheim Cemetery, Chicago, Ill

**sp: Abraham Joseph WEISS**

b 15 Oct 1881-Walamichova, Austria

m 1905-Chicago, Ill

d 1941-Arizona

**Ester Sarah WEISS**

b 15 Jan 1907-South Chicago, Ill  
d 30 Mar 1956-Mount Sinai Hosp, Chicago ILL

**sp: Nathan Woltzer HELMAN Nachum**

b 15 Nov 1907-Chicago, Ill  
m 1931-Chicago, Ill  
d 17 Jan 1998-Chicago, IL

**Robert Alan [Reuven Aharon] HELMAN**

b 27 Jan 1934-Mt. Sinai Hosp., Chicago, Ill.

**sp: Janet WILLIAMS**

b 11 Dec 1934-Des Moines, Ia  
m 13 Sep 1958-Des Moines, IA

**Marcus Ellison HELMAN**

b 20 Jun 1960-Chicago, Ill

**sp: Karen SMITH**

b -Atlanta, GA  
m 10 Nov 1990-Atlanta, GA

**Benjamin Eli SMITH-HELMAN**

b Aug 1993-Detroit, MI

**Bailey Shoshana SMITH-HELMAN**

b 6 Jun 1997-Huntington Woods, MI

**Adam Jacob HELMAN**

b 25 Jan 1963-Chicago

**Sarah Esther HELMAN**

b 30 Apr 1966-Chicago, Ill

**Marjorie Ruth HELMAN Malka Rivka**

b 26 Mar 1937-Mount Sinai Hosp; Chicago, Ill

**sp: Lawrence Charles KRAVITZ Aryeh**

b 27 Jul 1932-Lincoln Hospital, Bronx, NY  
m 9 Jun 1957-Cong. Rodfei Zedek, Chicago, ILL

**Alan Bruce KRAVITZ Aaron Benjamin**

b 9 Jul 1958-Beth Israel Hosp; Boston, Mass

**sp: Sandra Debby KRESCH Sara Dvora**

b 29 May 1961-Sinai Hospital, Detroit, MI  
m 26 May 1991-B, Mich

**Meryl Beth KRAVITZ Meira Brocha**

b 5 Oct 1994-Shady Grove Hosp., Rockville, MD

**Evan Samuel David KRAVITZ (Yitzchak)**

b 8 Jul 1997-Rockville, MD

**Natalie Anne KRAVITZ Nechama**

b 14 May 1999-Shady Grove Hosp., MD

**Saul Abram KRAVITZ Shaul Avraham**

b 20 May 1961-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston MA

**sp: Beryl Ann ROTHSTEIN**

b 1 May 1964-Pittsburgh, PA  
m 11 Aug 1985-Bnai Emunah Syn., Pittsburgh, Pa

**Ayelet Hadas KRAVITZ**

b 4 May 1990-Haifa, Israel



**Nadav Meir KRAVITZ**  
b 5 Aug 1992-Haifa, Israel

**Talya Sarah KRAVITZ**  
b 31 Oct 1997-Rockville, MD

**Elana Miriam KRAVITZ**  
b 31 Oct 1997-Rockville, MD

**Steven Jacob KRAVITZ Zvi Jacob**  
b 16 May 1965-Ellis Hosp.Schenectady NY

**sp: Esther KALEKO SIEGEL**  
b 19 Sep 1947-Chicago, IL  
m 11 Jun 1995-Cong.Beth El, Bethesda, MD

**Benjamin Kaleko (Baruch Natan) KRAVITZ**  
b 28 Jun 1994-Yekaterinburg, Russia

**Daniel Kaleko (Daniel Shimon) KRAVITZ**  
b 6 Nov 1995-Yekaterinburg, Russia

**Nathan J. WEISS**  
b 27 Oct 1910-Chicago, Ill  
d Nov 1986-San Francisco, CA

**sp: Rose HELLER**  
b 1 Mar 1915-Terra Haute, IN  
m Aug 1937-Chicago

**JoAnn WEISS**  
b Apr 1942-Mount Sinai Hosp., Chicago, Il

**sp: Barry LEVIN**  
m -Chicago, Ill

**Daniel LEVIN**  
b -Chicago, Ill

**Michael LEVIN**  
b -Chicago

**Rachel LEVIN**  
b -Chicago

**Jenny LEVIN**  
b -Chicago

**Gail {gittel} WEISS**  
b 1945-Mt. Sinai Hosp., Chicago

**Nettie LAPPORTE**  
b Dec 1888-Lithuania  
d Jul 1972-Los Angeles

**Edward LAPPORTE**  
b 1890-Lithuania  
d 1935-Chicago

**sp: Irene ROSENBERG**

**Jerome LAPPORTE**

**Robert LAPPORTE**

**sp: Sandy LAPPORTE**

**Edward LAPPORTE**

**Cynthia LAPPORTE**

**David Nathan LAPPORTE**

b 14 Mar 1893-Lithuania

d 13 Sep 1982

**sp: Reva [Rifka] [Bielestotsky] BROWN**

b 20 Nov 1889-Bielestock, Poland

m 30 Aug 1925-Chicago

d 26 Sep 1969-Chicago

**Allen [Alexander] LAPPORTE**

b 4 Jul 1926

**sp: Betty LAMBERT**

**Sharon LAPPORTE**

**Ronald LAPPORTE**

**Jill LAPPORTE**

**Robert LAPPORTE**

**sp: Doris KURTZ**

**Esther LAPPORTE**

b 11 Mar 1928

d Oct 1982

**sp: Sheldon MOSS**

**Linda MOSS**

b -Chicago

**Lisa Beth MOSS**

b -Chicago

**sp: Jim TUCKER**

**Emily [Esther] Janna TUCKER**

b 29 Mar 1992

**Paul [Pinchas] MOSS**

b 1957-Chicago

**sp: Patricia**

**Noah MOSS**

b 4 Apr 1987-Chicago

**Joshua MOSS**

b 20 Apr 1989

**Seymour [Zemach] LAPPORTE**

b 26 Mar 1930-Chicago

**sp: Anne FRANKEL**

b 27 Apr 1928-Singapore

m 15 Nov 1964-San Francisco, CA

**Daniel LAPPORTE**

b 3 Dec 1965-California

**sp: Lapporte JULEEN**

b 1967

m 11 May 1996

**Lydia Eve LAPPORTE**

b 27 Jul 1997-Walnut Creek, CA

**Michael LAPPORTE**

b 22 May 1967-California

sp: Rachel STAIRMAN  
b 1968  
m 2 May 1998-Denver, Co

Jack LAPPORTE  
b Nov 1998-Denver, CO

Sadie [Scheitel] Lapporte BERNSTEIN  
b 1895-Annikst, Lithuania  
d Aug 1972-Los Angeles, CA

Isaac LAPPORTE [LOPERT]

Rose [Pesha Raiza] LAPPORTE [LOPERT]

sp:

David BARON

sp:

Joseph BARON

Rachel Baron ZUKERMAN

Hannah LAPPORTE [LOPERT]



# Descendancy Chart

from my Paternal Grandfather's side

**Iosif HELMANU**

b 1809

d 4 Apr 1874

sp: **Hanta HELMANU**

b 1818

m -Ivesti

**Moise Iosif HELMAN**

b 1828-Romania

sp: **Hanna HELMAN**

b 1838

**Ruben HILLMAN**

sp:

**Della HILLMAN**

**Sam HILLMAN**

**Al HILLMAN**

**Louis HILLMAN**

sp: **Belle HILLMAN**

**Dorothy Helman BERMAN**

sp: **Joseph BERMAN**

**Schimon BERMAN**

sp: **Yehudit BERMAN**

**Yitzchok BERMAN**

**Mira BERMAN**

**Jacob HELMAN**

b 14 Feb 1873-Ivesti, Romania

d 6 Nov 1961-Artesia, NM

sp: **Tillie/Mathilda [Tonia] WOLITZER**

b 25 Apr 1883-Tulcea, Romania

m 10 Sep 1905-Cong.Ahavas Achim, Chicago

d 12 Aug 1954-Miami Beach, Fl

**Anna Helman Bernard KAUFMAN**

b 11 Sep 1906-Chicago

d 27 Apr 1997-Chicago

sp: **Eli BERNARD**

b 1 Mar 1907-Chicago, Ill

m 1924-Chicago

d 28 Oct 1953-At home, Miami Beach

**Natalie Ethyl [Nahami] BERNARD**

b 20 Jul 1927-Lying In Hosp., Chgo

sp: **Shel [Avrum Shlema] NEWBERGER**

b 30 Nov 1925-Chicago

m 1946-Covenant Club, Chicago

d 19 Aug 1992-At home, Evanston

**Steven [Eheskiel] NEWBERGER**

b 21 Jan 1948

sp: **Lynne Mack NEWBERGER**

b 1947



**Pamela NEWBERGER**  
b 19 Aug 1972

**Daniel NEWBERGER**  
b 19 Oct 1974

**Ari Jacob NEWBERGER**  
b 29 Jan 1982

**Richard Bernard [Baruch] NEWBERGER**  
b 15 Mar 1950

**sp: Judith Gould NEWBERGER**

**Victoria Michelle NEWBERGER**  
b 4 Feb 1984

**Bradley Arthur NEWBERGER**  
b 25 Jun 1986

**David Eli NEWBERGER**  
b 31 Jul 1953

**sp: Julia Tang NEWBERGER**  
b 1978

**Katherine Tang NEWBERGER**  
b 11 Jul 1978

**Charles Tang NEWBERGER**  
b 7 Sep 1981

**Jill NEWBERGER**  
b 2 Jun 1956

**sp: Edward GAGNON**

**Nathaniel Eliot [Eli] GAGNON**  
b 30 Aug 1983

**Alexander Gerard GAGNON**  
b 5 Sep 1985

**Ethan GAGNON**  
b 5 Sep 1985  
d 5 Oct 1985

**Donald Morris BERNARD**  
b 1931-Chicago

**sp: Geraldine Morris BERNARD**

**Michael Leonard BERNARD**  
b 1953

**sp: Young Joo CHOI**

**Christopher Alex BERNARD**  
b 1983

**James BERNARD**  
b 1987

**Tonia Helen BERNARD**  
b 1955

**sp: BOB CASSELL**

**sp: John HERRIN**

**Trevor Jacob HERRIN**  
b 1995

**Eli Lawrenced BERNARD Baptist Minister**  
b 1956

sp: **Lisa VIERTEL**

**Bethany BERNARD**  
b 1985

**Sarah BERNARD**  
b 1987

**Jesse Nathaniel BERNARD**  
b 1990

**Walter Jeffrey BERNARD**  
b 1959

sp: **Mary STEYER**

**R. Warren BERNARD**  
b 1991

**Tyler BERNARD**  
b 1993

**Joshua BERNARD**  
b 1995

**Judith Audrey Bernard SHAYMAN**  
b 20 Sep 1938-Chicago

sp: **Paul WEISS**  
b 1938

**Tamra Weiss WALTHALL DVM**  
b 20 Oct 1957

sp: **Roy Dell WALTHALL**  
b 1951

**Telly Rae WALTHALL**  
b 1988-Waco, TX

**Rydel Dexter WALTHALL**  
b 1991-Waco, Tx

**Ben David WEISS**  
b 28 Oct 1961

**Eli Edward WEISS**  
b 11 Nov 1963

sp: **Petrina BUERY**  
b 1967

sp: **Norman KAUFMAN**  
d 1963-Chicago

**Nathan Woltzer HELMAN Nachum**  
b 15 Nov 1907-Chicago, Ill  
d 17 Jan 1998-Chicago, IL

sp: **Ester Sarah WEISS**  
b 15 Jan 1907-South Chicago, Ill  
m 1931-Chicago, Ill  
d 30 Mar 1956-Mount Sinai Hosp, Chicago ILL

**Robert Alan [Reuven Aharon] HELMAN**  
b 27 Jan 1934-Mt. Sinai Hosp., Chicago, Ill.

sp: **Janet WILLIAMS**  
b 11 Dec 1934-Des Moines, Ia  
m 13 Sep 1958-Des Moines, IA



**Marcus Ellison HELMAN**  
b 20 Jun 1960-Chicago, Ill

**sp: Karen SMITH**  
b -Atlanta, GA  
m 10 Nov 1990-Atlanta, GA

**Benjamin Eli SMITH-HELMAN**  
b Aug 1993-Detroit, MI

**Bailey Shoshana SMITH-HELMAN**  
b 6 Jun 1997-Huntington Woods, MI

**Adam Jacob HELMAN**  
b 25 Jan 1963-Chicago

**Sarah Esther HELMAN**  
b 30 Apr 1966-Chicago, Ill

**Marjorie Ruth HELMAN Malka Rivka**  
b 26 Mar 1937-Mount Sinai Hosp; Chicago, Ill

**sp: Lawrence Charles KRAVITZ Aryeh**  
b 27 Jul 1932-Lincoln Hospital, Bronx, NY  
m 9 Jun 1957-Cong. Rodfei Zedek, Chicago, ILL

**Alan Bruce KRAVITZ Aaron Benjamin**  
b 9 Jul 1958-Beth Israel Hosp; Boston, Mass

**sp: Sandra Debby KRESCH Sara Dvora**  
b 29 May 1961-Sinai Hospital, Detroit, MI  
m 26 May 1991-B, Mich

**Meryl Beth KRAVITZ Meira Brocha**  
b 5 Oct 1994-Shady Grove Hosp., Rockville, MD

**Evan Samuel David KRAVITZ (Yitzchak)**  
b 8 Jul 1997-Rockville, MD

**Natalie Anne KRAVITZ Nechama**  
b 14 May 1999-Shady Grove Hosp., MD

**Saul Abram KRAVITZ Shaul Avraham**  
b 20 May 1961-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston MA

**sp: Beryl Ann ROTHSTEIN**  
b 1 May 1964-Pittsburgh, PA  
m 11 Aug 1985-Bnai Emunah Syn., Pittsburgh, Pa

**Ayelet Hadas KRAVITZ**  
b 4 May 1990-Haifa, Israel

**Nadav Meir KRAVITZ**  
b 5 Aug 1992-Haifa, Israel

**Talya Sarah KRAVITZ**  
b 31 Oct 1997-Rockville, MD

**Elana Miriam KRAVITZ**  
b 31 Oct 1997-Rockville, MD

**Steven Jacob KRAVITZ Zvi Jacob**  
b 16 May 1965-Ellis Hosp. Schenectady NY

**sp: Esther KALEKO SIEGEL**  
b 19 Sep 1947-Chicago, IL  
m 11 Jun 1995-Cong. Beth El, Bethesda, MD

**Benjamin Kaleko (Baruch Natan) KRAVITZ**  
b 28 Jun 1994-Yekaterinburg, Russia

**Daniel Kaleko (Daniel Shimon) KRAVITZ**  
b 6 Nov 1995-Yekaterinburg, Russia

**sp: Trudy Kane HELMAN**  
b Jan 1902  
m 1957-Chicago, Ill  
d Jan 1992-Chicago, Ill

**Dorothy Helman Sternberg FELDMAN**  
b 15 Dec 1908-Chicago, Ill  
d 1994-Corpus Christi, TX

**sp: Henry STERNBERG**

**JoAnn "Jody" Sternberg HEYMANN**  
b 1931-Chicago

**sp: Dan ELLIS**

**Stan ELLIS**  
b 1954-TX

**sp: Lynn Woodson ELLIS**  
b 1955

**Jennifer ELLIS**  
b 1981

**Tammy ELLIS**  
b 1978

**Terry / Tal ELLIS**  
b 1955-TX

**sp: Jewell ELLIS**  
b 1956

**Avigail ELLIS**  
b 1979-Israel

**Boaz ELLIS**  
b 1981-Israel

**Yooz ELLIS**  
b 1983-Israel

**Leslie ELLIS**  
b 1956-TX

**sp: Larry MATNEY**

**David ELLIS**  
b 1960-TX  
d 4 Jul 1993

**Debra ELLIS**  
b -TX

**sp: Mark HAMMOND**

**sp: Hans HEYMANN M.D.**

**Shirley STERNBERG**  
b 1933

**sp: Red PEDDY**

**Dana**

**sp: Sangerman JERRY**

**sp: David FELDMAN**



## Descendancy Chart

**Nachum WOLITZER Rabbi**

b -Romania

d 25 Feb 1893-Tulcea, Romania

sp: Sura WOLITZER

Abraham / youngest of 4 sons WOLITZER

sp: Sara WOLITZER

b 1852-Romania

m 1882-Focsani, Romania

d 1918-Romania

**Tillie/Mathilda [Tonia] WOLITZER**

b 25 Apr 1883-Tulcea, Romania

d 12 Aug 1954-Miami Beach, Fl

sp: Jacob HELMAN

b 14 Feb 1873-Ivesti, Romania

m 10 Sep 1905-Cong. Ahavas Achim, Chicago

d 6 Nov 1961-Artesia, NM

**Anna Helman Bernard KAUFMAN**

b 11 Sep 1906-Chicago

d 27 Apr 1997-Chicago

sp: Eli BERNARD

b 1 Mar 1907-Chicago, Ill

m 1924-Chicago

d 28 Oct 1953-At home, Miami Beach

**Natalie Ethyl [Nahami] BERNARD**

b 20 Jul 1927-Lying In Hosp., Chgo

sp: Shel [Avrum Shlema] NEWBERGER

b 30 Nov 1925-Chicago

m 1946-Covenant Club, Chicago

d 19 Aug 1992-At home, Evanston

**Steven [Eheskiel] NEWBERGER**

b 21 Jan 1948

sp: Lynne Mack NEWBERGER

b 1947

**Pamela NEWBERGER**

b 19 Aug 1972

**Daniel NEWBERGER**

b 19 Oct 1974

**Ari Jacob NEWBERGER**

b 29 Jan 1982

**Richard Bernard [Baruch] NEWBERGER**

b 15 Mar 1950

sp: Judith Gould NEWBERGER

**Victoria Michelle NEWBERGER**

b 4 Feb 1984

**Bradley Arthur NEWBERGER**

b 25 Jun 1986

**David Eli NEWBERGER**

b 31 Jul 1953

**sp: Julia Tang NEWBERGER**  
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**sp: John HERRIN**

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b 1990

**Walter Jeffrey BERNARD**  
b 1959

**sp: Mary STEYER**

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**Joshua BERNARD**

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**Evan Samuel David KRAVITZ (Yitzchak)**  
b 8 Jul 1997-Rockville, MD

**Natalie Anne KRAVITZ Nechama**  
b 14 May 1999-Shady Grove Hosp., MD

**Saul Abram KRAVITZ Shaul Avraham**  
b 20 May 1961-Beth Israel Hosp, Boston MA

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**Nadav Meir KRAVITZ**  
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**Stan ELLIS**

b 1954-TX

**sp: Lynn Woodson ELLIS**

b 1955

**Jennifer ELLIS**

b 1981

**Tammy ELLIS**

b 1978

**Terry / Tal ELLIS**

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**Avigail ELLIS**

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b 1960-TX

d 4 Jul 1993

**Debra ELLIS**

b -TX

**sp: Mark HAMMOND**

**sp: Hans HEYMANN M.D.**

**Shirley STERNBERG**

b 1933

**sp: Red PEDDY**

**Dana**

**sp: Sangerman JERRY**

**sp: David FELDMAN**

**Anna Volitzer LOEBNER**

b 1885-Tulcea, Romania

d 1958-Los Angeles

**sp: James /Jim LOEBNER**

**Bernard LOEBNER**

**sp: Ruth LOEBNER**

**Susan LOEBNER**

**Michael LOEBNER**

**Medill LOEBNER**

**sp: Kay LOEBNER**

**Nathan LOEBNER**



